

The Exploitations of Medieval Romance

Edited by Laura Ashe,
Ivana Djordjević and Judith Weiss



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The Exploitations of Medieval Romance

As one of the most important, influential and capacious genres of the middle ages, the romance was exploited for a variety of social and cultural reasons: to celebrate and justify war and conflict, chivalric ideologies, and national, local and regional identities; to rationalize contemporary power structures, and identify the present with the legendary past; to align individual desires and aspirations with social virtues. But the romance in turn exploited available figures of value, appropriating the tropes and strategies of religious and historical writing, and cannibalizing and recreating its own materials for heightened ideological effect. The essays in this volume consider individual romances, groups of writings and the genre more widely, elucidating a variety of exploitative manoeuvres in terms of text, context, and intertext.

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This series aims to provide a forum for critical studies of the medieval romance, a genre which plays a crucial role in literary history, clearly reveals medieval secular concerns, and raises complex questions regarding social structures, human relationships, and the psyche. Its scope extends from the early middle ages into the Renaissance period, and although its main focus is on English literature, comparative studies are welcomed.

Proposals or queries should be sent in the first instance to one of the addresses given below; all submissions will receive prompt and informed consideration.

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Edited by

LAURA ASHE, IVANA DJORDJEVIĆ
AND JUDITH WEISS

D. S. BREWER

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Contents

Preface	vii
Notes on Contributors	viii
Abbreviations and Editorial Note	x
Introduction	1
<i>Laura Ashe</i>	
1 The Fairies in the Fountain: Promiscuous Liaisons	15
<i>Neil Cartlidge</i>	
2 Saracens and Other Saxons: Using, Misusing, and Confusing Names in <i>Gui de Warewic</i> and <i>Guy of Warwick</i>	28
<i>Ivana Djordjević</i>	
3 The Exploitation of Ideas of Pilgrimage and Sainthood in <i>Gui de Warewic</i>	43
<i>Judith Weiss</i>	
4 <i>Chanson de geste</i> as Romance in England	57
<i>Melissa Furrow</i>	
5 Patterns of Availability and Demand in Middle English Translations <i>de romanz</i>	73
<i>Rosalind Field</i>	
6 Reading a Christian–Saracen Debate in Fifteenth-Century Middle English Charlemagne Romance: The Case of <i>Turpines Story</i>	90
<i>Diane Vincent</i>	
7 Subtle Crafts: Magic and Exploitation in Medieval English Romance	108
<i>Corinne Saunders</i>	
8 Meeting Grounds: Gardens in Middle English Romance	125
<i>Arlyn Diamond</i>	
9 ‘Als for the worthynes of þe romance’: Exploitation of Genre in the <i>Buik of Kyng Alexander the Conquerour</i>	139
<i>Anna Caughey</i>	
10 <i>Sir Gawain and the Green Knight</i> and the Limits of Chivalry	159
<i>Laura Ashe</i>	
Index of Manuscripts	173
General Index	175

Preface

The theme of exploitation in medieval romance was an idea which grew out of the tenth biennial conference on Romance in Medieval Britain, held at the Centre for Medieval Studies in the University of York in 2006, and organized by Nicola McDonald. The editors are very grateful to Nicola for making that conference possible. The present volume contains some papers first presented at that conference, and others commissioned subsequently.

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Abbreviations

ANTS	Anglo-Norman Text Society
BL	British Library
BnF	Bibliothèque nationale de France
CFMA	Classiques français du moyen âge
CUL	Cambridge University Library
EETS	Early English Text Society
ES	Extra Series
NLS	National Library of Scotland
NLW	National Library of Wales
OPS	Occasional Publications Series
OS	Original Series
STC	Short-Title Catalogue

Editorial note

Quotations in Latin and French have been translated; where no author is cited, translations are our own. In the case of Middle English, only *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* has been glossed, in recognition of its high proportion of unfamiliar dialectal words.

Introduction

Laura Ashe

Literature resists being used, because it has no use; it makes no assertions, it claims no authority, nor does it subvert authority, because that would be to substitute one kind of truth-claim for another. In place of propositional statement, it offers self-conscious verbal play, in place of logic, rhetoric, and in place of truth, fiction.¹

Derek Pearsall's 2004 salvo against the furthest reaches of historicist criticism expresses, with characteristic brio, the dangers of reading literature solely in terms of its complicity with – and creation and instantiation of – cultural and political ideologies. But as one might expect in a volume entitled *The Exploitations of Romance*, I would respond with some equivocation. The text's claim to fictionality is itself ideological; it demands imaginative freedoms and resists truth-telling responsibilities, while nevertheless insisting upon the audience's participation in its inherent presuppositions and preoccupations. Pearsall makes a vital point, that it is not always possible to produce convincing, historicized readings of literary texts; their freedom from immediate reference is, one could say, the heart of their poetic value. But prevailing fictions evolve over time. Behind the changing meanings of the stories we tell ourselves lie the reasons for their being told; where the attempt to historicize an individual text lacks purchase, the relations *between* texts can offer access: to the operations being performed upon received material, the moments of heat and invention, and the transmission of social and cultural meaning in the text.

The medieval romance is a particularly instructive case, because it is both the most capacious of genres and arguably the simplest, the most fundamental. The romance is a forerunner of the novel; it is the narrative of the individual's movement through society and (sometimes) history; it is the genre in which fictionality re-emerged in the twelfth century, and yet also a vehicle in which culturally important ideologies and identities receive their full expression. This ambivalence was of course apparent to the writers and readers of romance from its earliest days, and was exploited in a variety of ways – not least for humorous effect. When Chrétien de Troyes, in *Cligés*, has the emperor of Greece earnestly instruct his son that *largesse*, above all other virtues, is the quality that makes the man, one can imagine the laughter, the archness of the audience's agreement, as they listen to a poet seeking to please in a court governed by patronage:

¹ Derek Pearsall, 'Medieval Literature and Historical Enquiry', *Modern Language Review*, 99 (2004), xxxi–xliv (p. xxxvii).

The Exploitations of Medieval Romance

Par soi fet prodome Largesce,
Ce que ne puet feire Hautesce
Ne Courtesie ne Savoirs
Ne Gentillesce ne Avoirs
Ne Force ne Chevalerie
Ne Hardemanz ne Seignorie
Ne Biautez ne nule autre chose.²

[Largesce alone makes one a worthy man, not high birth, courtesy, wisdom, gentility, riches, strength, chivalry, boldness, power, beauty or any other gift.]³

This is a useful reminder that the romance was born for a precise form of exploitation – the generation of patronage – and in the courtly romances written for courtly audiences, that desire is worn upon the sleeve. The poet-chronicler Wace scatters his work with direct pleas for payment;⁴ in contrast, Chrétien can deploy the façade of fictionality in order to ventriloquize his, and his audience's, desires. This is evidently done in full self-awareness, and it is intimately bound up with a new assurance about authorship, rather than source material, as the location of authority:⁵

Cil qui fist *D'Erec et d'Enide*,
Et *Les comandemanz d'Ovide*
Et *L'art d'amors* an romans mist,
Et *Le mors de l'espaule* fist,
Del roi Marc et d'Ysalt la blonde
Et *De la hupe et de l'aronde*
Et *Del rossignol la muance*,
Un novel conte recomance
D'un vaslet qui an Grece fu
Del linage le roi Artu.

(lines 1–10)

[He who wrote *Erec and Enide*, who translated Ovid's *Commandments* and the *Art of Love* into French, who wrote *The Shoulder Bite*, and *King Marc and Yseut the Blonde*, and *The Hoopoe and the Swallow*, and *The Metamorphosis of the Nightingale*, begins now a new tale of a youth who, in Greece, was of King Arthur's line. (p. 123)]

² Chrétien de Troyes, *Cligés*, ed. by Stewart Gregory and Claude Luttrell (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 1993), lines 201–7.

³ Translated by William W. Kibler, in *Chrétien de Troyes: Arthurian Romances* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1991), pp. 123–205 (p. 125). Translations have sometimes been modified slightly to be more literal.

⁴ See for example *The Roman de Rou*, ed. by A. J. Holden, trans. by Glyn S. Burgess, notes by Elisabeth van Houts (St Helier: Société Jersiaise, 2002), part II, lines 1357–60; part III, lines 143–69; and Burgess's comments, pp. xxi–xxii.

⁵ See D. H. Green, *The Beginnings of Medieval Romance: Fact and Fiction, 1150–1220* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002); cf. W. T. H. Jackson, 'The Nature of Romance', *Yale French Studies*, 51 (1974), 12–25.

This open piece of advertising on Chrétien's part inaugurates *Cligés*'s self-conscious intertextuality, naming earlier works whose participation in the present romance serves repeatedly to nudge the reader into an acknowledgement of the poet's artistry and control. This is an intertextuality which combines ironic verisimilitude – when Fenice criticises Yseut for her unchaste behaviour, this renders both women more 'real' – with the new pleasures and opportunities of fictional narrative, a play of authority with authorship. In this opening passage it can be seen that Marc and Yseut, Ovid and Arthur, are all the poet's creatures. He makes a careful distinction – albeit helpful for versification – between texts he created ('fist') and those he translated ('an romans mist'); but these designations appear to be inaccurate: the stories of hoopoe, swallow, nightingale and 'shoulder bite' are all derived from Ovid's *Metamorphoses*. But this vagueness is a part of the point: these writings are Chrétien's; he exploits the glamour and authority of the famous names, and they are all under *his* patronage for the continuation of their fame. In what sense is this text a 'novel conte'? Is it new to the poet, or new to the world? Certainly the 'linage le roi Artu' is literary and textual, not genealogical; this is a reflex by which value is annexed to the present text; but that is an intertextual value, itself cohering in other works. This poetic lineage is directly deployed in the tale's opening with Alexander's desire to serve Arthur, to join the court 'renomée par le monde' ('renowned throughout the world', line 73), in a discussion set in Greece which perfectly, fictively, corroborates the reputation claimed for the Arthurian court by Geoffrey of Monmouth's and Wace's chronicles.⁶

Arthur plays a particularly interesting role in *Cligés* because in this romance alone Chrétien seems to have experimented with a different – but contemporary – narrative pattern. It has now long been acknowledged that the insular French romances of the twelfth century exhibit characteristics which distinguish them sharply from their continental counterparts.⁷ In comparison with Chrétien's Arthurian romance, insular romance typically evinces a much greater concern with historicity and real geography, with the workings of the state, and the relations between king and people. The characteristic plot is of the hero's unjust usurpation and exile, and his ultimate return as a conquering king; the path to restoration is rendered complicated by the machinations of traitors, by single combats and open battles, and the denial or acknowledgement of hereditary and legal rights.⁸ To some extent, then, these romances operate in a different sphere;

⁶ See Geoffrey of Monmouth, *The History of the Kings of Britain*, ed. by Michael D. Reeve and trans. by Neil Wright (Woodbridge: Boydell, 2007), pp. 204–5; Wace, *Roman de Brut: A History of the British*, trans. by Judith Weiss (Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 1999), lines 9731–84.

⁷ See for example Susan Crane, *Insular Romance: Politics, Faith, and Culture in Anglo-Norman and Middle English Literature* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986); Rosalind Field, 'Romance as History, History as Romance', in *Romance in Medieval England*, ed. by Maldwyn Mills, Jennifer Fellows and Carol M. Meale (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 1991), pp. 163–73; Laura Ashe, *Fiction and History in England, 1066–1200* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007).

⁸ Rosalind Field, 'The King Over the Water: Exile-and-Return Revisited', in *Cultural Encounters in the Romance of Medieval England*, ed. by Corinne Saunders (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2005), pp. 41–53; Laura Ashe, '“Exile-and-return” and English Law: The Anglo-Saxon Inheritance of Insular Romance', *Literature Compass*, 3 (2006), 300–17.

they exploit not the freedom of fiction but the ideological force of pseudo-history, providing models of good and bad kingship, justice and the law. Some critics have suggested that the insular romances can more properly be regarded as hybrid with the *chansons de geste*, by virtue of the characteristics they share with that continental genre.⁹ In the present volume, Melissa Furrow adumbrates the ways in which insular authors have appropriated material and forms originally regarded as properly French, exploiting the pseudo-historical narrative's capacity to idealize 'lethal chivalric violence' (p. 67), and in the process rendering the insular romance very different from the continental. Given a situation of shared reception – the audiences for both kinds of romance must, at the very least, have overlapped – the circumstances of contrasting production have important implications for our understanding of English and French politics and culture.¹⁰ In *Cligés*, the poet appears to be exploiting the possibilities of the insular genre, as he presents a dynastic narrative of exile-and-return, inheritance and usurpation, marriage and children.¹¹ And yet his treatment of these themes is coloured by an arch disinterest, a knowing deployment of important insular ideological tropes which stands apart from the concerns and understandings that would make sense of them.

This appropriation and adaptation of insular themes begins with the self-imposed 'exile' of *Cligés*'s father Alexander as a young man, seeking to prove himself in service at Arthur's court. His arrival with twelve retainers, '*biax et genz*' ('handsome and noble', line 321), followed by the ritual of introduction and welcome, echoes one of the finest and earliest insular French romances: the *Romance of Horn*. Horn's arrival at Hunlaf's court with his fellows could readily be a model for Alexander's arrival, as the barons stare admiringly at '*li enfaunt natural, / Bien lor erent seaunt lor bliaut de cendal*' ('the noble children, [whose] silken tunics suited them well');¹² while both Alexander and Horn complete the effect by surpassing their companions in beauty and evident nobility. Both kings compliment their petitioners, recognize their status, and promise to aid them in achieving knighthood: '*Molt vuel que l'en vos i enort / Con franc vaslet et sage et dolz*' ('It is my desire that you be honoured here as a noble young man, wise and handsome', *Cligés*, lines 378–9); '*Par ma fei, dist li reis, "beau vallet, tu es sage. / Mut es gentil e franc: bien piert en tun visage"*' ("Truly", said the king, "fair boy, you are wise, and your face well reveals your nobility and high birth", *Horn*, lines 320–1). But

⁹ See Judith Weiss, 'Insular Beginnings: Anglo-Norman Romance', in *A Companion to Romance from Classical to Contemporary*, ed. by Corinne Saunders (Oxford: Blackwell, 2004), pp. 26–44 (pp. 30–4); Marianne Ailes, 'The Anglo-Norman *Boeve de Haumtone* as a *chanson de geste*', in *Sir Bevis of Hampton in Literary Tradition*, ed. by Jennifer Fellows and Ivana Djordjević (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2008), pp. 9–24.

¹⁰ I explore some of these implications in 'William the Marshal, Lancelot, and Arthur: Chivalry and Kingship', *Anglo-Norman Studies*, 30 (2007), 19–40; and 'The Anomalous King of Post-Conquest England', in *Every Inch a King: From Alexander to the King of Kings*, ed. by Lynette Mitchell and Charles Melville, forthcoming.

¹¹ For a different reading of the 'realism' of *Cligés*, see David J. Shirt, 'Cligés: Realism in Romance', *Forum for Modern Language Studies*, 13 (1977), 368–80.

¹² *The Romance of Horn by Thomas*, 2 vols, ed. by Mildred Pope, ANTS 9–10 (Oxford: ANTS, 1955–64), lines 203–4.

Horn's situation is desperate, while Alexander's is artificial, chosen and orchestrated not only by the poet but by the character. Horn must attain knighthood in order to fight against invading pagans, defend his lord's land, and reconquer his own; Alexander becomes a knight of Arthur's idealized court, and finds self-realization in love and marriage.

The episode of Alexander's sojourn with Arthur is structured around his and Soredamor's sufferings with unspoken love for one another, in a series of lyrical set-pieces which evidently draw upon another insular text, Thomas of Britain's *Tristan*.¹³ Yet this emotional exposition takes place against the backdrop of an apparently serious and politicized plot: the usurpation of the throne of Britain by Arthur's treacherous regent Angrés. This echoing of the Mordred story from Geoffrey and Wace, which brings about the downfall of Arthur and begins the long final decline of British rule, has all its wider significance sublimated to the demands of Chrétien's present romance, as the lengthy account of the war is interspersed with the love story, and ends with Alexander's personal apotheosis:

A Guinesores en un jor
Ot Alixandres tant d'enor
Et tant de joie con lui plot.
Trois joies et trois enors ot:
L'une fu del chastel qu'il prist,
L'autre de ce que li promist
Li rois Artus qu'il li donroit,
Quant sa guerre finee avroit,
La meillor reiaume de Gales;
Le jor l'en fist roi an ses sales.
La graindre joie fu la tierce,
De ce que s'amie fu fierce
De l'eschaquier dom il fu rois.
[...]
Nez est Cligés, an cui mimore
Fu mise an escrit ceste estoire.

(lines 2343–66)

[On that day at Windsor Alexander experienced all the joy and happiness he could want. His honours and joys were threefold: one was in capturing the castle; another was the reward promised him by King Arthur for ending the hostilities: the finest kingdom in Wales, of which he was made king that day in Arthur's halls; but the greatest joy was the third: that his sweetheart was queen of the chessboard where he was king. [...] So Cligés was born, in whose memory this story was composed in writing. (pp. 151–2)]

¹³ Lines 541–65 of *Cligés* offer a shorter and less intricate version of Thomas's famous extended pun on 'la mers' (the sea), 'Tamer' (bitterness) and 'amer' (to love), preserved in the Carlisle Fragment, ed. by Ian Short in *Early French Tristan Poems*, ed. by Norris J. Lacy, 2 vols (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 1998), II, pp. 173–83.

This is an example of Chrétien's engagement with insular historiography, only then to exploit it in the cause of furthering his fictional, idealized romance; here, precisely, the entire Arthurian episode serves solely to deliver to his hero Cligés that intertextual lineage promised at the romance's opening. The key idea so central to the insular chronicle and romance, of proper and improper kingship, is here rendered meaningless: the 'kingdom in Wales' is never mentioned again,¹⁴ and is abandoned when Alexander returns to Greece to engage in another version of vitiated kingship, as he exercises power while his brother Alis retains the title of emperor. The enfeebled king typical of the Arthurian romance is also fully in play, in striking contrast with the martial figurehead of the chronicle, whom one would expect to meet in a plot of this type:

Quant li rois oï la novele,
Trestoz ses barons en apele,
Iriez et plains de mautalant.
Por ce que mialz les antalant
De confondre le traïtor,
Dit que li blasmes est toz lor
De son tribol et de sa guerre,
Car par aus bailla il sa terre
Et mist an la main au felon
Qui pires est de Guenelon.
N'i a un seul qui bien n'otroit
Que li rois a reison et droit,
Car ce li conseillierent il.

(lines 1067–79)

[As soon as the king heard the news he angrily summoned all his barons. To better inspire them to punish the traitor, he said that they were entirely to blame for his worries and strife since it was at their counsel that he had entrusted his land to the hands of the renegade, who was worse than Ganelon. To a man they agreed that the king spoke rightly and well, for they had indeed given him that advice. (p. 136)]

This strange abdication of authority is combined with the inappropriateness of Arthur's incentives to his knights: in the context of a desperate siege to regain a usurped throne, Chrétien's Arthur seeks to encourage individuals with an entirely romanticized gift:

¹⁴ It is possible that this is a species of ironic comment on Henry II's and his predecessors' practice of speculative granting of land in Wales, which remained to be conquered before the grantee could hold it: see R. R. Davies, *Domination and Conquest: The Experience of Ireland, Scotland, and Wales, 1100–1300* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990): 'Prospective grants and future acquisitions could only be converted into realizable assets through immense effort and, above all, with the support of devoted followers' (p. 37). However, there may be no deep significance; the 'rei waleis' could be used as a stock trope of martial valour, as in Jordan Fantosme's *Chronicle*, ed. and trans. by R. C. Johnston (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1981), line 161.

Ashe: Introduction

Une coupe de molt grant pris
Li donrai de .xv. mars d'or,
La plus riche de mon tresor.
[...]
Molt est boene la cope d'uevre,
Et qui la verité descuevre,
Mialz que l'uevre ne que li ors
Valent les pierres de defors.
S'il est sergenz, la cope avra,
Par cui li chastiax pris sera.
Et s'il est pris par chevalier,
Ja ne savra querre loier
Avoec la cope qu'il ne l'ait,
Se el monde trover se lait.

(lines 1530–46)

[I shall give [the man who captures the castle] a very valuable cup worth fifteen gold marks, the finest in my treasury [...] The workmanship is most beautiful, but if you wish to know the truth, the precious stones set in it are worth even more than the gold or the workmanship. If the castle is captured by a foot-soldier, he shall have the cup. If a knight takes it, he shall have, with the cup, any reward he might request if it can be found in this world. (p. 141)]

Finally, Alexander's key role in rescuing Arthur from this crisis evidently prefigures Lancelot, and the essential difficulty by which the romanticized king, unlike his warlike chronicle counterpart, is always surpassed by his finest knights.

The example of Arthur thus demonstrates *Cligés's* fundamental disingenuousness in its handling of important insular figures and themes. While the text is apparently directly concerned with kingship, it never – as is ubiquitous in the insular romance – comments on or explores the characteristics and practices of the ideal king, beyond the unsurpassed virtue of largesse. The supposedly national battles and wars of the text are no more significant than the single combats in which Chrétien's other heroes, Erec, Yvain or Lancelot, prove their own individual worth. And the pseudo-historical, dynastic aspect of the text, the generational time-span over which it stretches, is mocked by the stasis inherent to the Arthurian romance: when *Cligés* in his turn is received in Arthur's court, it is entirely unchanged. Very simply, Chrétien insists upon having things both ways, exploiting both the timelessness of his Arthurian setting and the pseudo-historicity of the insular, dynastic romance.

To return, finally, to Chrétien's engagement with a very different insular text, the ongoing comparison with the Tristan legend allows Chrétien yet another avenue by which to exploit his own command of fictionality. In providing the magical potion which preserves both Fenice's chastity and Alis's ignorance of that chastity, Chrétien comically asserts the unreality of his tale – all the more so, since he has his characters directly refer to the analogous story of Marc and Yseut. If this greatest of love triangles could simply be happily resolved by taking the right medicine,

then the poet mocks the tragic significance of their suffering, exposing its aesthetic, symbolic construction as one which can be altered with the stroke of a pen.

Chrétien's toying with romance forms is virtuosic, self-aware, and benign; he demonstrates his capacity to master – or at least to appropriate and exploit – the materials of the insular pseudo-historical romance. The result is a serious play with hybridity, an intertextual performance which calls upon audience recognition of the transformations his text enacts upon its shared themes and tropes. Understood in this way, it could be said that Chrétien's *Cligés* supports Pearsall's distrust of historicized readings: this Arthurian romance mocks the ideologies of its insular counterparts, abstracting them from their usual fields of meaning and rendering them fully fictionalized.

But this is only one example of the exploitations performed by and upon the medieval romance. A text may manoeuvre itself away from historical referents, and even flee into magical otherworlds, but it cannot evade the possibility of a critical reading which forcibly locates the text's meaning in this world. The most powerful of such readings are not, of course, those of modern critics, but those of contemporary and later medieval texts – redactions, translations, analogues, responses, and commentaries. In Neil Cartlidge's chapter on the motif of the fairy mistress in Marie de France's *Lanval* and two *fabliaux*, the *lai* is thoroughly exposed, its courtly pretensions shown up as so much window dressing on a narrative atavistically concerned with male power over the female body. In delineating the *fabliau*'s intertextual commentary on Marie's poem, Cartlidge reveals two distinct levels of exploitation: the fairy mistress, far from being a figure of female authority, is the (thoroughly physical and material) embodiment of an exploitative male fantasy; meanwhile, the *fabliau* itself ruthlessly exploits the models offered by the *lai*, in an appropriation which renders the courtly poem's pretensions both ridiculous and more serious in their evident misogyny. This, then, is an intertextuality which contaminates and consumes, rather than supporting a shared authority.¹⁵

While Cartlidge argues that the *fabliaux* function as critical readings of the *lai* which change the meaning of that poem, Ivana Djordjević's chapter shows that redactions of a single romance can themselves work as readings and misreadings of the original. In discussing the changing geographical referents in manuscripts of *Gui de Warewic* and its Middle English translations, she illustrates the contingency of the texts' exploitation of historical events. The Anglo-Norman *Gui*, probably dating from before 1210,¹⁶ is scattered with a variety of toponyms and ethnonyms: 'and while the role of significant names can be merely decorative, there are times when they are exploited with a specific agenda in mind' (p. 28). Djordjević teases out the uses of geographical specificity to the earliest author of the tale, and the romance emerges as a nationalizing project, a pseudo-history which elides

¹⁵ Cf. A. C. Spearing, 'The Lanval Story', in *The Medieval Poet as Voyeur: Looking and Listening in Medieval Love-Narratives* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), pp. 97–119.

¹⁶ Judith Weiss, 'Boeve de Haumtone' and 'Gui de Warewic': *Two Anglo-Norman Romances*, trans. by Judith Weiss, *The French of England Translation Series 3* (Tempe, AR: Arizona Center for Medieval and Renaissance Studies, 2008), pp. 12–13.

the Conquest in folding Athelstan's England into a contemporary space.¹⁷ But in tracing the rendering of place-names across the different manuscripts, Djordjević draws attention to the vagaries of manuscript error in transmission. In the context of significant exploitation of naming choices by the early poet, these errors thus illustrate not merely scribal inattention, but a loss of the meaning which originally animated the choice of place-name. The implication is of an aporia in cultural understanding, a fourteenth-century poet or scribe who cannot make sense of the motivating forces behind the original *Gui*'s geographical precision. This observation of the dilution of significance represents an important nuancing of the usual analysis, which has frequently, and justly, seen Middle English redactions of Anglo-Norman romances as participants in a growing project of nationalism. With some historical verisimilitude, Geffrei Gaimar's chronicle of around 1136 has the ancient Danish king Havelok eventually rule in England over a kingdom which stretches 'Des Hoiland tresqu'en Colecestre'¹⁸ ('from [the county of] Holland [in Lincolnshire] to Colchester'); in the *Lai d'Havelok* of around 1200, this is preserved as 'Nichole e tote Lindesie' ('Lincoln and all Lindsey').²⁰ But in the Middle English *Havelok* of c. 1290, his rule has been expanded:

Havelok bilefte wit joye and gamen
In Engelond and was ther-inne
Sixti winter king with winne.²¹

This exploitation of localized chronicle history as romanticized national history forms an interesting counterpoint with Djordjević's readings of *Gui* and *Guy*.²² The later redactions of the Guy of Warwick legend seem to have failed to exploit the nationalizing meanings inscribed in the text by the earlier poet, in contrast with the *Havelok* poet's ready appropriation of idealized themes of kingship, justice and rule to the English nation. And yet in both cases geographical specificity has in some sense been lost, in favour of a more generic understanding of figures of value.

This sense of the loss of specific meaning, of the romance's capacity to absorb value whilst discarding precision, is equally present in Judith Weiss's reading of *Gui de Warewic*'s confused piety. Weiss alerts us to the ill-fitting nature of *Gui*'s sudden conversion, the narrative's lack of serious commitment to the tropes it so

¹⁷ On this phenomenon in general, see Robert Rouse, *The Idea of Anglo-Saxon England in Middle English Romance* (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2005).

¹⁸ Geffrei Gaimar, *Estoire des Engleis*, ed. by Alexander Bell, ANTS 14–16 (Oxford: ANTS, 1960), line 803.

¹⁹ *Anglo-Norman Dictionary*, s.v. 'Holand'; cf. Gaimar, *Estoire*, lines 1592–4 and note to line 1592.

²⁰ *Le Lai d'Havelok*, in *Le Lai d'Havelok and Gaimar's Havelok Episode*, ed. by Alexander Bell (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1925), line 1106; trans. by Judith Weiss in *The Birth of Romance: An Anthology* (London: Everyman, 1992), pp. 141–58 (p. 158).

²¹ *Havelok*, in *Four Romances of England*, ed. by Ronald B. Herzman, Graham Drake, and Eve Salisbury (Kalamazoo: Medieval Institute Publications, 1999), lines 2963–5.

²² Cf. Thorlac Turville-Petre, 'Havelok and the History of the Nation', in *Readings in Medieval English Romance*, ed. by Carol M. Meale (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 1994), pp. 121–34.

readily engages, of penitence, confession and restitution, the hero's renunciation of the world and redemption for his secular sins. As she observes, the romance deploys the typical moves of hagiography in celebrating and near-sanctifying its secular, chivalric hero; but this exploitation of saintly value comes at the cost of 'both historical and literary plausibility' (p. 46); indeed, of both dramatic unity and character consistency. This cannot be explained by the drama of conversion for, as Weiss observes, the conversion itself is not just fictional, but inaccurate in terms of the narrative which precedes it. Nevertheless, all of this must be set in the context of the Guy of Warwick legend's extreme popularity and long influence: evidently these inconsistencies were not experienced by contemporary audiences as a vitiation of the text's value. Indeed, in suggesting a possible provenance for *Gui* in an association with St Frideswide's priory, Weiss contributes a geographical possibility with fascinating cultural implications for the mutual collaboration – and exploitation – of hagiography and romance. This pattern in the insular French and Middle English romances then stands in important contrast with the Arthurian romance's problematic negotiations with Christian ideals, which give rise to the pious knights of the Grail Quest and the inevitable destruction of Arthur's court.²³ Here the insular romance shows itself capable of an easy exploitation of hagiographical figures, whose deeper implications it fundamentally refuses to acknowledge.

The distinction between continental and insular romance is again important in Melissa Furrow's exploration of the ways in which the romance genre in England appropriated the forms and content of the continental *chanson de geste*. This is equally a story of appropriation and loss of specificity, as the matter of French history is flattened to a generic Christian and chivalric set of values open to exploitation by English poets. Similarly, 'the trope of the battle against the Saracen enemy is exploited from the earliest days of romance in England as a way of eliding the awkwardness of military aggression within a Christian ideology' (p. 72). Indeed, observing the generic tropes of thirteenth- and fourteenth-century romance, as in the stylized and evidently fictionalized Saracen invaders of *King Horn*,²⁴ might in the light of both Furrow's and Djordjević's chapters lead us to rethink the specificity of earlier versions. The proposed Irish provenance for the *Romance of Horn*, at Henry II's Christmas court of 1171–2,²⁵ has offered the text up to a benign reading which notes that despite the ongoing piecemeal invasion and conquest of Ireland,

²³ See Gabrielle M. Spiegel, *Romancing the Past: The Rise of Vernacular Prose Historiography in Thirteenth-Century France* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993), p. 153; Laura Ashe, 'The Hero and his Realm in Medieval English Romance', in *Boundaries in Medieval Romance*, ed. by Neil Cartlidge (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2008), pp. 129–47.

²⁴ See Diane Speed, 'The Saracens of *King Horn*', *Speculum*, 65 (1990), 564–95.

²⁵ M. Dominica Legge, *Anglo-Norman Literature and its Background* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1963), pp. 96–104 (esp. p. 99); Judith Weiss, 'Thomas and the Earl: Literary and Historical Contexts for the *Romance of Horn*', in *Tradition and Transformation in Medieval Romance*, ed. by Rosalind Field (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 1999), pp. 1–13; on the historical episode, see Marie Therese Flanagan, 'Strongbow, Henry II and Anglo-Norman Intervention in Ireland', in *War and Government in the Middle Ages: Essays in Honour of J. O. Prestwich*, ed. by John Gillingham and J. C. Holt (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), pp. 62–77.

the Irish of the text are envisaged as a noble, Christian people.²⁶ This appears to rest in contrast with the clerical condemnation of the Irish as ‘*Christiani nomine, re pagani*’ (‘Christians in name, pagans in fact’), which justified that conquest.²⁷ However, there is a darker interpretation available in the immediate context of Dublin in 1171: the ‘Irish’ of the text could be silently identified with the already embedded English of Ireland, an immigrant society which shared the values of the wider English and French aristocracy and identified itself as both independent and culturally equal with those aristocratic societies across the water.²⁸ If that is so, then the unpleasant implication is that the invading pagans of the text, in a classically exploitative move, are in some sense collocated with the native Irish, whose right to possess their own land was at the time being thrown into question.

To return once again to Pearsall’s cautionary words, such contextualizations will rarely, if ever, be more than speculative and, as we have already seen, the transformations performed upon texts in later versions leave us on uncertain ground in seeking the meaning of the changes involved. Are differences in transmission or translation reliable signs of new significance, or of the loss of old importance? When is a theme being appropriated for new uses, and when simply deployed for its intertextual value? When is intertextuality a form of critique or mockery? How exploitative, finally, are these multiple retellings? These questions come into particular relief in the light of Rosalind Field’s important chapter, which surveys the patterns of insular romance culture across the period. She shows that thirteenth- and fourteenth-century Middle English romances largely found their material in the fields of interest established by the twelfth- and thirteenth-century insular French romances: that is, ‘the exploitation of available romance material by another generation and in another language’ (p. 73), by which ‘the principle of selection of texts to translate appears to have been that they were already selected and a familiar presence in English literary culture’ (p. 88). This dependence upon earlier insular literature has important implications for the role of insular French in our developing understanding of English medieval literary culture.²⁹ In the context of the present volume, it illustrates the degree to which translation is itself a form of exploitation; medieval romance again emerges as a fundamentally cannibalistic, intertextual, capacious genre, consuming its own materials and reproducing them, multiplying their possible meanings and significance, or transferring them to different contexts, diluting specificity and engendering generic symbols of value.

²⁶ As I suggested in *Fiction and History in England*, p. 157, note 95.

²⁷ Bernard of Clairvaux, *Vita S. Malachiae*, in *Patrologia Latina*, CLXXXII. 1073–1118 (col. 1084).

²⁸ This attitude is most vividly embodied, albeit filtered through distinct familial bias, in Gerald of Wales’s *Expugnatio Hibernica: The Conquest of Ireland*, ed. and trans. by A. B. Scott and F. X. Martin (Dublin: Royal Irish Academy, 1978). See also the representation of Irish lordships in the *History of William Marshal*, ed. by A. J. Holden, trans. by S. Gregory, with notes by D. Crouch, 3 vols, ANTS OPS 4–6 (London: ANTS, 2002–6).

²⁹ In this development Field has been extremely influential: see for example ‘Romance in England, 1066–1400’, in *The Cambridge History of Medieval English Literature*, ed. by David Wallace (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), pp. 152–76.

Diane Vincent's essay on the fifteenth-century *Turpines Story* provides a detailed case study of just such a set of paradoxes. She shows the ways in which the Middle English romance is implicated in contemporary controversies about heresy, and in particular about the role of disputation, which was both the means of refuting heresy and the engine by which heterodox beliefs were advanced. Vincent suggests that '*Turpines Story* was available to both Lollard and anti-Lollard readings since Lollards and the orthodox were in conflict precisely because they were concerned about the same issues and because asking and answering questions was the method employed from *both* positions to bring those in error back to the faith' (p. 107). She thus demonstrates the open exploitation of the romance form as a vehicle for moderating contemporary religious conflict: the centrepiece of the romance, with a happy lack of dramatic realism, is a lengthy 'scholastic disputation framed by a deadly battle' (p. 107). But this religious conflict is disguised in anodyne terms – the debate touches upon none of the thorny issues of fifteenth-century controversy, confining itself to the Apostles' Creed – and thus the debate is itself laid open to exploitation by any partisan, of orthodoxy or heterodoxy.

Corinne Saunders's piece on magic illustrates the capacity of romance seemingly endlessly to expand the field of fiction, breaking the rules of historical realism in engaging with the fantastical, forbidden and exotic. This annexation of imaginative freedom allows the romance to exploit a much wider range of possibility in the representation of character and event. But, more profoundly, Saunders explores the ways in which magic is inherently connected with the subject of exploitation: 'magical knowledge offers secret, unfair or unpredictable power over others, and is often both manipulative and dangerous' (p. 108). In this sense, we might think back to Neil Cartlidge's argument that the *fabliau's* nasty power politics expose the same essence beneath the courtliness of the *lai*, and we might ponder the degree to which narratives of magical manipulation display impulses which lie beneath all fictional narrative: the impulse to control, the will to power, or even merely to mischief. In this sense, all fiction is exploitative of possibility – the characters and events held in the author's hands, to return to the model of Chrétien's self-conscious authorship – and the magical narrative simply lays bare the extremity of that authorial control, by expanding it into the unreal and supernatural.

Arlyn Diamond's chapter on medieval gardens inhabits a particular nexus of cultural and literary meaning, pulling literary models into the material world. She illustrates the extent to which historical individuals could exploit expectations set by romance literature, in constructing spaces in which particular freedoms and constraints of behaviour pertained. The garden was importantly liminal in both literature and life – the zone of lovers' meetings – both outside the private household and excluded from the public sphere by high walls, in reality and imagination. The artificiality of the garden, its cultivated and designed appropriations of natural forms, plants and creatures, make it a textual metaphor not unlike the romance, performing its chosen aesthetic operations upon the materials to hand. In *Cligés*, Fenice's secret garden has been cultivated for perfect comfort and pleasure:

Ashe: Introduction

Enmi le vergier ot une ante
De flors chargiee et bien foillue
Et par dedesoz estandue.
Ensi estoient li rain duit
Que vers terre pandoient tuit
Et pres jusqu'a terre baissoient
[...]
Fenice autre leu ne covoit.
Et desoz l'ante est li praiax
Molt delitables et molt biax,
Ne ja n'iert li solauz tant chaux
A midi, quant il est plus haux,
Que ja rais i puisse passer,
Si le sot Jehanz conpasser
Et les branches mener et duire.
La se va Fenice deduire,
S'i a fet ansor jor son lit;
La sont a joie et a delit.

(lines 6380–98)

[In the middle of the orchard stood a grafted tree, covered with leaves and flowers, with a wide-spreading top. The branches were trained into a sort of bower, hanging down and nearly touching the ground. [...]. Fenice wanted no other place. Beneath the tree the grass grew fair and soft, and even when the sun was at its hottest at noon no ray could penetrate the bower, so skillfully had John trained and arranged the branches. Fenice went there for her repose, and by day they set up her bed beneath the tree where the lovers had their joy and pleasure. (p. 201)]

In essence, the garden becomes an analogue for the romance itself – a constructed, textualized space, protected from the exterior world, within which illicit desire is explored and performed.

These central chapters offer multiple versions of the romance's capacity to contain and adapt almost any material for its own uses. But just as Cartlidge queries the romance's ability to withstand another genre's direct critique, the last two chapters of this volume find, in very different ways, the romance's failings. Anna Caughey argues that the *Buik of King Alexander* 'exploits the genre of "romansys" to include as many different types of writing as possible' (p. 139). She finds that the mid-fifteenth-century Scots version of the Alexander legend deploys ancient, and much adapted, material 'as a continuation and reinforcement of political concerns which had a particular resonance in Scotland' (p. 143), exploiting a great variety not only of themes and tropes, but styles and forms, in a didactic offering which adapts the romance to the demands of the *speculum principum* genre. However, she argues that the romance is not actually sufficient to the task of containing all these different demands, and that it betrays severe anxieties about the qualities of its hero. Certainly the resultant inconsistencies in character bear comparison with

Weiss's examination of *Gui de Warewic*; but where the latter romance displays little or no concern with its unevenness of tone, Caughey argues that the *Buik* finds Alexander consistently unable to live up to the idealized model of kingship which it has created for – and, paradoxically, through – him. This is an interesting example of that characteristic capaciousness working against the romance itself; in sum, different parts of the *Buik* perform critical readings of one another, which leaves the whole in a state of unresolved conflict.

The final chapter offers a reading of possibly the finest Middle English romance, *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, in terms of its role as both archetype and critique of the whole genre. I argue that the romance exploits the recurring trope of the 'Beheading Game', which appears in numerous analogues, in order to lay bare the contradictions at the heart of chivalric ideals. In essence, the Green Knight's challenge requires Gawain to die in order to uphold the honour of the court: but the court's honour is itself derived from Gawain, its best knight, and his living reputation; thus the Green Knight's challenge is apparently impossible to fulfil successfully. I suggest that the historical circumstances of chivalry's first emergence as a literary and cultural ideology, in the late twelfth century, conditioned its nature as a code which made no space for the properly heroic death: chivalry was itself a collection of practices devoted to economic and social exploitation, to the normalization and celebration of the way of life of the mounted aristocracy. As such, its connections with Christianity were an appropriation of value, rather than an absorption of significance. Finally, then, I argue that the Gawain-Poet deftly, subtly and yet ruthlessly exploits the romance in order to expose the emptiness of its own highest values.

The Fairies in the Fountain: Promiscuous Liaisons

Neil Cartlidge

A valiant and handsome knight spends all his money attempting to support himself at court. One day, he goes for a ride in the countryside and eventually comes to a meadow where there is a flowing stream or spring. Here he encounters three beautiful, but apparently otherworldly, women. What happens next involves a certain amount of gratuitous female nudity and results in the knight being granted certain magical privileges. These provide him with abundant access to both money and sexual gratification. After returning to civilization, he enjoys these gifts untroubled for a while, but then finds himself in a situation where he is challenged by the presiding lady of the court to prove the reality of his magical good fortune. This he initially finds difficult to do, but he is eventually vindicated; and the lady is shown to have attempted to stifle the truth about her own sexual behaviour.

This account might serve as a very rudimentary summary of Marie de France's *Lai Lanval*, or else of the anonymous *Lai de Graellent* – but not just of these two Old French *lais*.¹ It is also an accurate description, so far as it goes, of a text that is known as *Le Chevalier qui fist les cons parler* (literally, 'The Knight Who Made the Cunts Speak', or, as Carter Revard has wittily suggested, 'The Vagina Dialogues').² It is a *fabliau* that survives in seven medieval manuscripts, including an English one (London, BL, Harley MS 2253).³

¹ Marie de France, *Lanval*, ed. by Alfred Ewert, *Lais* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1952), pp. 58–74; trans. by Glyn S. Burgess and Keith Busby in *The Lais of Marie de France* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1986), pp. 73–81. *Graelent*, ed. by Alexandre Micha, in *Lais féériques des XIIe et XIIIe siècles* (Paris: Flammarion, 1992), pp. 19–61; *French Arthurian Literature IV: Eleven Old French Narrative Lays*, ed. and trans. by Glyn S. Burgess and Leslie C. Brook (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2007), pp. 366–409.

² *Le Chevalier qui fist les cons parler*, ed. by Willem Noomen and Nico van den Boogaard, in *Nouveau recueil complet des fabliaux*, 10 vols (Assen: Van Gorcum, 1983), III, pp. 45–173; ed. by Ian Short and Roy J. Percy, in *Eighteen Anglo-Norman Fabliaux*, ANTS Plain Texts 14 (London, 2000), pp. 25–8; trans. by Carter Revard in 'Four Fabliaux from London, British Library MS Harley 2253, Translated into English Verse', *Chaucer Review*, 40 (2005), 111–40 (pp. 127–34). Revard's title alludes to *The Vagina Monologues*, a play by Eve Ensler first published in 1998.

³ On *fabliaux* in England, see Nico van den Boogaard, 'Le Fabliau anglo-normand', in *Third International Beast Epic, Fable and Fabliau Colloquium, Münster 1979: Proceedings*, ed. by Jan Goossens and Timothy Sodmann (Cologne: Böhlau, 1981), pp. 66–77; John Hines, *The Fabliau in English* (Harlow: Longman, 1993), pp. 37–42; Barbara Nolan, 'Anthologizing Ribaldry: Five Anglo-Norman Fabliaux', in *Studies in the Harley Manuscript: The Scribes, Contents, and Social Contexts of British Library MS Harley 2253*, ed. by Susanna Fein (Kalamazoo: TEAMS, 2000), pp. 289–327; Roy J. Percy, 'Anglo-Norman Fabliaux and Chaucer's Merchant's Tale', *Medium Ævum*, 69 (2000), 227–60; Carter Revard, 'From French "Fabliau Manuscripts" and MS Harley 2253 to the *Decameron*

Uncanny encounters with beautiful women at (or in) running water are by no means unusual in medieval literature,⁴ and they often provide a licence for sexual fantasy,⁵ but in these three texts particularly, the 'fairies the fountain' motif combines with so many other features, and in such a distinctive way, as to suggest an especially close connection between them.⁶ To put it more technically, the motif is the centre of a nucleus of apparently shared or borrowed material, a nucleus substantial enough to mean that these three texts form a distinct group of their own.⁷ But there are important differences as well, differences tendentiously veiled by the analysis that I have just made, and out of these differences emerge generic affiliations and aspirations that are downright antagonistic – antagonistic enough, indeed, to cause a degree of shock when the *lais* are juxtaposed with this *fabliau*.

and the *Canterbury Tales*', *Medium Ævum*, 69 (2000), 261–78. For the Harley version of the *fabliau* in facsimile, see the *Facsimile of British Museum MS. Harley 2253*, ed. by N. R. Ker, EETS, OS 255 (London: Oxford University Press, 1964), fols 122v–124v.

⁴ See Pierre Gallais, *La Fée à la fontaine et à l'arbre: un archétype du conte merveilleux et du récit courtois* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1992).

⁵ As Helen Cooper dryly puts it in *The English Romance in Time: Transforming Motifs from Geoffrey of Monmouth to the Death of Shakespeare* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 'fairies lie outside normal morality, especially where sex is concerned' (p. 214).

⁶ In *Lanval*, the knight encounters a lady served by two damsels; this takes place in a field where there is a running stream, 'une ewe curaunt' (line 45); none of them is bathing – and indeed the lady sits in a tent – but she is wearing only a shift (line 99), her flanks are exposed, as are her neck and breast (lines 104–5), and the knight is able to judge that 'mut ot le cors bien fait et gent' ('her body was well formed and handsome', line 100). In *Graelent*, the knight again encounters a lady accompanied by two damsels; this takes place by a spring, 'une fontaine, / Dont l'ewe estoit et clere et bele' ('a spring, / The water of which was clear and beautiful', lines 218–19); the lady is bathing naked; and Graelent bluntly tells her, 'Bele, molt avez gent le cors' ('Fair one, you have a very beautiful body'; ed. Burgess and Brook, line 266). In the Harley version of *Le Chevalier*, there are three 'damoiseles', all of them bathing naked in a stream ('un petit russhel'; ed. Short and Percy, line 59) near to a spring ('une fonteyne', line 58), but no explicit comment is made about the maidens' bodies – the three women are simply said to be 'sages, cortois e tres beles' ('wise, courteous and very beautiful', line 62). In all the other extant medieval copies of *Le Chevalier*, the three maidens are bathing in the spring, 'une fontaine / Qui bele estoit et clere et saine' ('a spring, which was beautiful, clear and wholesome'; ed. Noomen and van den Boogaard, lines 107–8), where there is also a running stream ('Si en coroit granz li ruisseaus', line 109); and it is appreciatively observed that 'tant avoient les chars blanches, / Les cors bien faiz, les braz, les hanches' ('they had very pale complexions, and shapely bodies, arms and hips', lines 123–4).

⁷ This is to leave aside the question of the relationship between *Lanval* and its progeny in Middle English, which has been studied by A. C. Spearing, *The Medieval Poet as Voyeur: Looking and Listening in Medieval Love-Narratives* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), pp. 97–119; Elizabeth Williams, 'A Damsell by Herself Alone': Images of Magic and Femininity from *Lanval* to *Sir Lambewell*, in *Romance Reading on the Book: Essays on Medieval Narrative Presented to Maldwyn Mills*, ed. by Jennifer Fellows et al. (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1996), pp. 155–70; and Myra Stokes, 'Lanval to Sir Launfal: A Story Becomes Popular', in *The Spirit of Medieval English Popular Romance*, ed. by Jane Gilbert and Ad Putter (Harlow: Longman, 2000), pp. 56–77. See also Elizabeth Archibald, 'The Breton Lay in Middle English: Genre, Transmission and the Franklin's Tale', in *Medieval Insular Romance: Translation and Innovation*, ed. by Judith Weiss, Jennifer Fellows and Morgan Dickson (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2000), pp. 55–70. For the term 'nucleus', see Derek Brewer, 'Retellings', in *Retelling Tales*, ed. by Thomas Hahn and Alan Lupack (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 1997), pp. 9–34 (pp. 23–4).

For example, the gifts granted to Lanval by the fairy-lady are her own love (magically and secretly available at all times), together with mysteriously unlimited riches, and these, moreover, are dispensed with a marked degree of decorum – he is her ‘ami’ (lines 110, 143, 159), she his ‘belle’;⁸ while, in describing Lanval’s new wealth, Marie carefully avoids any vulgar reference to sums of money by referring to it only metonymically, as ‘gold and silver’ (‘or e argent’, line 142).⁹ By contrast, the gifts granted to the knight of the Harley *fabliau* are:

- (1) that he will be warmly received in any house where he chooses to stay, and no matter how long he choose to stay:

En tous lyus ou vus vendrez,
De tous honoré serrez
E molt chery e molt amez
Taunt come ileque demorrez.

(*Le Chevalier*, ed. Short and Percy, lines 83–6)

- (2) that no woman will ever be able to resist his sexual advances:

Ne est dame ne damoisele,
Ne seit ele ja si bele,
Si sa amour desirrez
E de vus amer le priez,
Qe s’amour ne vus grantera
E tous vos pleysirs en fra.

(*Le Chevalier*, ed. Short and Percy, lines 91–6)

- (3) that he will be able to ask questions, and also get replies, from any woman’s ‘con’ or, failing that, her ‘cul’ (from her ‘cunt’ or her ‘arsehole’ – to translate in terms as indecorous as those of the *fabliau* itself):

Je vus dorroi le pöer
De fere cul e coun parler
A vostre requeste communement,
Derere e devant le gent:
De quanque vus lur demaunderez
Certeyn respounz averez.

(*Le Chevalier*, ed. Short and Percy, lines 103–8)

For the fairies to be made the agents of such ribaldry could, in itself, be taken as a derisive response to the credulousness or mysticism implicit in the unworldly

⁸ Both terms are also used in *Graelent* (‘bele’ at line 266, ‘amis’ at lines 335 and 337). By contrast, the knight in the Harley version of the *fabliau* says nothing at all to the women, except to thank them, rather curtly, for their gifts (‘Damoisele, grant mercis!’; ed. Short and Percy, line 109). In the continental version, the knight thanks the first *fée* (addressing her as ‘Dame’; ed. Noomen and van den Boogaard, line 213); after that he is apparently too embarrassed by the nature of the fairies’ gifts to say anything in reply.

⁹ Cf. *Graelent*, ed. Burgess and Brook, lines 319–20: ‘Je vos donrai molt richement / Deniers et dras, or et argent’ (‘I shall give you in great abundance / Money and clothing, gold and silver’).

aspirations of the 'Breton lay'.¹⁰ Yet it is not just the difference of tone that is significant here. The fairies' gifts are also much more exploitative and invasive; and they imply victims in a way that the *lais* do not. It could still perhaps be argued that, rather than contradicting the dynamics of the *lais* (and, in particular, their impulse to wish-fulfilment),¹¹ the *fabliau* only makes those dynamics more explicit: that they develop, rather than contradict, the *lais*' tendency to foster fantasies that are anything but unworldly. In the sense that *Graelent* takes fewer pains to conceal the coercions by which its protagonist achieves his desires, its affinities with *Le Chevalier* seem much more obvious (and less potentially embarrassing) than those of *Lanval*. It is only in *Graelent* and in the *fabliau* that the fairies are blackmailed, in effect, by the unchivalrous theft of their clothes while they are bathing.¹² It is also only in *Graelent* that the protagonist actually rapes the fairy-maiden¹³ – a crime not mitigated for the modern reader by the narrator's subsequent assertion that the fairy-maiden herself had planned for this to happen.¹⁴ While there is no such violence in the *fabliau*, its repeated invasions of women's sexual privacies could be seen as a parallel crime. Yet it is the *fabliau*'s relationship with *Lanval* that seems most provocative, precisely because Marie de France's treatment of this material is so much more demure. It is *Lanval* (rather than *Graelent*) that has most to lose in any comparison with such a text as *Le Chevalier*, since it is in *Lanval* that the fantasy common to all three texts comes closest to a kind of courtly sublimation.¹⁵ If, at least for argument's sake, the *Chevalier* could be seen as a kind of anti-*Lanval* – a malicious twin or Doppelgänger – what would that say about the pretensions to a distinct refinement of sensibility that Marie's *Lais* so clearly express? Is the *Chevalier* simply a parody of *Lanval*? Or is there any sense in which *Lanval* implicitly provokes a response of this kind? That is to say, to

¹⁰ Gallais notes (*La Fée*, p. 25) that the 'croyance aux merveilles' associated with the 'fairies in the fountain' motif 'ne manque pas d'être tournée en dérision par les auteurs de fabliaux' ('the belief in marvels [...] is unfailingly derided by the authors of the *fabliaux*'), and he cites *Le Chevalier* as a case in point.

¹¹ On 'wish-fulfilment' in romance, see Dafydd Evans, 'Wishfulfilment: The Social Function and Classification of Old French Romances', in *Court and Poet: Selected Proceedings of the Third Congress of the International Courtly Literature Society*, ed. by Glyn S. Burgess (Liverpool: F. Cairns, 1981), pp. 129–34.

¹² *Graelent*, ed. Burgess and Brook, lines 237–72; *Le Chevalier*, ed. Short and Percy, lines 69–80. This motif also recurs in the anonymous *lai Guingamor* (which is also edited by Burgess and Brook, pp. 141–95), at lines 437–43.

¹³ *Graelent*, ed. Burgess and Brook, lines 278–304. On the issues raised here, see Kathryn Gravdal, *Ravishing Maidens: Writing Rape in Medieval French Literature and Law* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1991); and Corinne J. Saunders, *Rape and Ravishment in the Literature of Medieval England* (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2001).

¹⁴ *Graelent*, ed. Burgess and Brook, lines 329–31.

¹⁵ This point seems to me to hold even though some of Marie de France's own work has sometimes been classified as *fabliau*. None of it is to be found in the *Nouveau recueil complet des fabliaux*, but see Short and Percy, pp. 1–2, who print four of Marie's fables among their *Eighteen Anglo-Norman Fabliaux*, pp. 7–9. In addition, as Mortimer J. Donovan points out, 'at least two of her narrative lays [*Equitan* and *Bisclavret*] present *fabliau* situations' (Donovan, *The Breton Lay: A Guide to Varieties* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1969), p. 61).

what extent are the cynicism and sensuality of the *fabliau* already latent in *Lanval*? And to what extent can the *Chevalier* be read as a valid commentary on the moral and social values of Marie's *Lais*?¹⁶

It can certainly be argued that both *Lanval* and *Le Chevalier* connect money and sex together so closely as to suggest that the one is implicitly a figure of the other.¹⁷ Indeed, it is only in *Lanval* (as opposed to either *Graelent* or *Le Chevalier*) that the otherworldly lady is admired from the outset for her wealth as well as her beauty,¹⁸ and it is only in the *lais* (*Graelent* as well as *Lanval*), that the protagonist is immediately granted great wealth. The anonymous knight of the *fabliau* is certainly able to make money with enviable ease, but only as a consequence of his peculiar powers over women – in the continental version of the *fabliau* (as opposed to the one in the Harley manuscript), the fairies explicitly state that they granted him these powers precisely because they would make him rich.¹⁹ *Lanval*'s fairy mistress offers him her love and her body ('s'amur e sun cors') together with unlimited wealth in such a way as to suggest that all such favours necessarily come as a package. Even the language used here clearly suggests a direct equivalence: just as he will get money 'a sun talent' ('just as he wants'), so she promises to come to him in secret in order to 'fere tut vostre talent' ('do everything you want'):

Quant la meschine oï parler
Celui que tant la peot amer,
S'amur e sun cors li otreie.
Ore est Lanval en dreite veie!
Un dun li ad duné après:
Ja cele rien ne vudra mes
Quë il nen ait a sun talent;

¹⁶ These questions are complicated, to some extent, by the fact that both *fabliau* and *lai* could be seen as aspects of a single larger genre, the *Kurzerzählung* or *récit bref* (see Paul Zumthor, *Essai de poétique médiévale* (Paris: Seuil, 2000), pp. 464–78). Still, as J.-C. Payen points out, 'nous sentons à la lecture (et l'auditoire de l'époque devait déjà percevoir le fait) qu'un fabliau n'est pas un lai' ('we feel, as we read (and the audience of the period must have already noticed this) that a fabliau isn't a lai'), ('Lai, fabliau, exemplum, roman court: pour une typologie du récit bref aux XIIe et XIIIe siècles', in *Le Récit bref au moyen âge*, ed. by Danielle Buschinger (Amiens: Université de Picardie, 1980), pp. 7–23 (p. 7)).

¹⁷ On the close association in romance between fairies, money and sex, see Cooper, *English Romance in Time*, pp. 207–9. In Walter Map's story 'Of the Fantastic Illusion of Gerbert' (*De nugis curialium*, ed. by M. R. James, C. N. L. Brooke and R. A. B. Mynors (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1983), dist. iv., c. 11, pp. 351–65), Gerbert encounters a fairy-maiden sitting on a carpet surrounded by 'a huge heap of money' ('feminam [...] inaudite pulcritudinis, maximo insidentem panno serico, habentem coram positum maximum denariorum aceruum'). This fairy considerably suggests that Gerbert should take away and spend this 'heap' of money in order to prove that this is not 'phantom money' ('fantasticam [...] pecuniam').

¹⁸ Admittedly, the continental version of the *fabliau* states that the fairies' clothes were made of beaten gold (ed. Noomen and van den Boogaard, line 119); but this is still considerably less emphatic than *Lanval*, in which it is said that neither Queen Semiramis nor the Emperor Octavian would have been able to afford even a flap of the tent in which the maiden sits (lines 81–6).

¹⁹ 'Nule n'en soit envers li chiche, / Ainz faisons le pseudome riche' (ed. by Noomen and van den Boogaard, lines 192–3).

The Exploitations of Medieval Romance

Doinst e despende largement,
Ele li troverat assez [...]
'Quant vus vodrez od mei parler,
Ja ne savrez cel liu penser,
U nuls puïst aver s'amie
Sanz reproece, sanz vileinie,
Que jeo ne vus seie en present
A fere tut vostre talent.'

(*Lanval*, lines 131–9; 163–8; my italics)

[When the girl heard these words from the man who loved her so, she granted him her love and her body. Now Lanval was on the right path! She gave him a boon, that henceforth he could wish for nothing which he would not have, and however generously he gave or spent, she would still find enough for him [...] 'Whenever you wish to speak with me, you will not be able to think of a place where a man may enjoy his love without reproach or shame, that I shall not be there with you to do your bidding.']

Moreover, Lanval is poor to begin with because King Arthur has overlooked him in the distribution of gifts, and specifically of 'femmes e tere' ('women and land', line 17), a phrase that again suggests a close association between the sexual and the economic privileges of Arthur's men.²⁰ Indeed, the very fact that Lanval's poverty is so marked at the beginning of the tale makes it look like a condition of meeting the fairy-maiden in the first place, and this is true, too, of *Le Chevalier* – which also heavily emphasizes its protagonist's initial poverty.²¹ There is even a sense in which the *nouveau riche* Lanval could be seen as a kind of 'kept man', or even a *gigolo*, continually profiting from what the fairy calls 'de mun cors seisine' ('possession of my body', line 150). The knight of the *fabliau* trades on his power over female 'cons e culs' in the sense that his privileged knowledge of other people's sexual secrets makes them only too keen to buy his goodwill, as he soon discovers. The continental version of this text also contains a prologue in which the very telling of such tales is celebrated as a means of making money (literally, of putting pennies in purses), as if the kind of bawdy talk of which the *fabliau* is composed could itself be seen as equivalent to the special knowledge obtained by its protagonist.²² This is a perspective that perhaps casts an interesting light on Lanval's generosity to *jongleurs*,²³ which could be read as another aspect of

²⁰ In *Graelent*, the protagonist's generosity attracts the amorous interest of Arthur's queen. When he rebuffs her she slanders him to the king, who withholds what he owes, and it is this which causes Graelent's insolvency.

²¹ On 'poor knights' in *fabliau* and romance, see Marie-Luce Chênerie, "'Ces curieux chevaliers tournoyeurs...': des fabliaux aux romans", *Romania*, 97 (1976), 327–68.

²² 'Flablel sont or mout encorsé: / Maint denier en ont enborsé / Cil qui les content et les portent' ('Tales are widely current these days: those who recount them and carry them about have put a lot of coins in their purses'; ed. Noomen and van den Boogaard, lines 1–3).

²³ *Lanval*, lines 211–12; Graelent is also conspicuously generous to entertainers (*Graelent*, ed. Burgess and Brook, lines 405–6).

the self-referentiality that has been seen as characteristic of the *fabliau* as a genre.²⁴ Most modern critical analyses of medieval attitudes to money start from the premise that currency is a form of signification,²⁵ and I suppose it could be argued on this basis that both *Lanval* and the *Chevalier* use wealth as a figure of the knowledge (or of the power of knowledge) that they derive from the 'other world' of fairy (or of women). Yet it seems to me that what the *fabliaux* generally express is not so much an interest in semiotics as a brazen confidence in commodification, and a willingness to extend the notion of commodification beyond the bounds in which it is usually confined. In other words, the literary equation between money and sex is a means of debasement – a form of prostitution – in which sex (and people having sex) is made to look cheap. Whether one tries to be cheerful about that perspective (as Chaucer pretends to be in the Shipman's Tale)²⁶ or is offended by it, it is difficult in either case to be surprised at such a move being made in a *fabliau*, since one of the defining characteristics of *fabliaux* as a genre is their indifference to human dignity. What is less easy to deal with is the discovery of the same equation being made in a text like *Lanval*, which in other respects expresses the courtly aspirations that are much more characteristic of romance.

Both *Lanval* and *Le Chevalier* make secrecy a central theme.²⁷ In the former, the prohibition against revealing the fairy-lady's existence could be read as an extension of the courtly principle that a noble lover should be careful not to betray his lady's name – that is, 'it simply articulates a well-known point of romantic etiquette'.²⁸ In the latter, by contrast, it seems to be assumed that the power to make female body parts speak is useful precisely because women always have guilty secrets. In other words, the theme of secrecy here reflects an underlying misogyny.²⁹ In this context, the talking orifices of the *fabliau* could also be seen simply as a more graphic equivalent of the various talismans (the horns and mantles) that serve as magical chastity tests elsewhere in medieval literature, and for them too, the point is that all, or nearly all, women will fail the test.³⁰ In this

²⁴ On this point, see R. Howard Bloch, *The Scandal of the Fabliaux* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1986), especially p. 108, where he suggests, 'But what are the [the powers bestowed by the fairies in *Le Chevalier*] if not those of the poet or jongleur? The author of the *fabliaux* achieves exactly what is attributed to the knight; he makes *cons* speak.'

²⁵ See, e.g., Andrew Cowell, *At Play in the Tavern: Signs, Coins, and Bodies in the Middle Ages* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1999), esp. pp. 2–6; Bloch, *The Scandal of the Fabliaux*, pp. 72–5.

²⁶ On the money/sex nexus in the Shipman's Tale, see Lee Patterson, *Chaucer and the Subject of History* (London: Routledge, 1991), pp. 349–66, and Helen Cooper, *Oxford Guides to Chaucer: The Canterbury Tales* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), pp. 281–3.

²⁷ Cf. also *Graelent*, ed. Burgess and Brook, lines 316–18.

²⁸ Stokes, '*Lanval* to *Sir Launfal*', p. 64.

²⁹ In *Graelent*, of course, the premise that women are not to be trusted has already been 'proved' by the behaviour of Arthur's queen. For an attempt to analyse secrecy as a theme in medieval literature, see Karma Lochrie, *Covert Operations: The Medieval Uses of Secrecy* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1999), and my review in *Medium Ævum*, 70 (2001), 137–8.

³⁰ See, e.g., Ulrich von Zatzikhoven, *Lanzelet*, trans. by Thomas Kerth (New York: Columbia University Press, 2005), p. 94, and p. 209, note 191; *The Anglo-Norman Text of Le lai du cor*, ed. by C. T. Erickson, ANTS 24 (Oxford, 1973), esp. pp. 5–9.

respect, *Le Chevalier* might be said to be merely following a seam of misogyny that is already deeply embedded in romance, insisting on the similar values of *fabliaux* and romances, in a fashion that is ultimately much more mischievous than parodic. This raises the issue of gender, and the curious ways in which it is modelled both in *Lanval* and in the *fabliau*. Far from demonstrating the masculine virtues of prowess that we are told he possesses, Lanval performs no deeds of valour and he is actually no more convincing as a hero than his anonymous counterpart in the *fabliau*.³¹ Moreover, none of the desires achieved by both protagonists is exactly manly, bold or chivalric but rather something more furtive and puerile, in a way that lends itself to psychoanalytical criticism, of the kind recently practised by A. C. Spearing. Certainly, both of the *lais* specifically emphasize the pornographic effect of the fairy's nakedness:

Il s'esgarda, si la vit bele;
Amurs le puint de l'estencele.

(*Lanval*, ed. Ewert, lines 117–18)

[He looked at her and saw that she was beautiful. Love's spark pricked him so that his heart was set alight.]

Il n'a si bele fame ou mont;
Soz ciel n'a riens qui tant li plese;
Toute en oublie sa mesese.

(*Graelent*, ed. Burgess and Brook, lines 232–4)

[There was no more beautiful woman in the whole world. Nothing on earth pleased him so much; he completely forgot his misery.]

Yet even if 'there are also elements of female fantasy involved in the lady's self-display', as Spearing suggests, his reading of voyeurism in *Lanval* is nevertheless a great deal more benign than the one articulated by *Le Chevalier qui fist les cons parler*, which goes out of its way to imagine another form of exposure (the self-confessing 'con') that no woman could possibly find enjoyable.³² Of course, the knight's power 'to make cunts speak' is the product of a magic that is only dispensed by female figures, and in neither *Le Chevalier* nor *Lanval* can the fairies be described as wholly passive or disempowered, but the *fabliau* still serves as a loud reminder that any instinct for 'self-display' on the part of medieval women

³¹ In *Graelent*, the narrator explains that the fairy-maiden grants his wishes because she 'voit qu'il est cortois et sages, / Biaux chevaliers et preuz et larges, / Et se il se depart de li, / Jamés n'avra si bon ami' ('she saw he was courtly and wise, a handsome knight, brave and generous, and that, if he left her, she would never have such a good lover'; ed. Burgess and Brook, lines 307–10). Given that he has just taken advantage of her nakedness by stealing her clothes, then raping her, this seems like a remarkably charitable assessment. Perhaps it is her tolerant attitude – as much as her beauty or nakedness – that makes this a wish-fulfilment fantasy. In the continental version of the *fabliau*, the leading *fée* also calls the knight 'courtly' ('Cist chevaliers est mout cortois!'; ed. Noomen and van den Boogaard, line 181) but her tone is manifestly sarcastic.

³² Spearing, *The Medieval Poet as Voyeur*, p. 100.

necessarily had a converse – privacy – that was, in practice, at least as important.³³ From this perspective, it seems odd that literary critics have sometimes been so ready to suggest that such shamelessly ‘self-displaying’ figures as the fairies in both *Lanval* and *Le Chevalier* should be read as models of medieval femininity. Even as recently as 1992, for example, Pierre Gallais felt able to describe the half-naked *fée* found in medieval texts as ‘in a word, a dream, the perfect, ideal (young) woman, who with her magic creates happiness all around her’ (‘en un mot, la (jeune) femme parfaite, idéale, “du rêve”, qui fait naître, par son enchantement, le bonheur autour d’elle’).³⁴

Finally, both Marie de France and the anonymous author of *Le Chevalier* address the issue of the extent to which the marvellous tales that they tell deserve to be believed. Marie uses a number of different techniques to underwrite the ‘reality’ of her *Lais* (they are inherited from the Bretons, they are derived from ancient songs, their titles are both traditional and etymologically significant, and so on);³⁵ and her stories are often constructed in such a way as to enact their own validity³⁶ – as in *Lanval*, where we see the whole of Arthur’s court acknowledging the truth of the protagonist’s marvellous claims about his lady’s beauty.³⁷ There is a similar proof-scene in the *fabliau*, although in this case the demonstration is doubly self-referential, since (as it turns out) the only truth that the lady has denied is that she has tried to hide the truth. We never discover whether or not she has been guilty of anything,³⁸ only that she has been determined to frustrate the knight’s means of finding out. (She stuffs her ‘con’ with cotton, so that it cannot reply to his questions, only to be then betrayed by her own ‘cul’.) The *fabliau* also ends with a formal naming of the hero that looks very much like a burlesque version of Marie’s emphasis on the titles of her texts. What makes it burlesque is that it is obscene, with the knight and squire christened respectively ‘Chyvaler de Coun’ and ‘Huet de Culet’ (ed. Short and Percy, line 291). Yet in the moral economy of the *fabliaux*, obscenity itself is often presented as a guarantee of the truth. It could perhaps be argued that much the same function is performed by Marie’s plain style and emphasis on brevity.³⁹ That is, plain-speaking serves as a guarantee of honest intentions, but, of course, plain-speaking of the kind practised by *Le Chevalier* only demonstrates either an indifference to social decencies or else an eagerness to cause offence.⁴⁰

³³ This is a point that can perhaps be illustrated by reference to Neil Cartlidge, ‘“Alas I Go with Chylde”: Representations of Extra-Marital Pregnancy in the Middle English Lyric’, *English Studies*, 79 (1998), 395–414.

³⁴ Gallais, *La Fée à la fontaine*, p. 12.

³⁵ See, e.g., Zumthor, *Essai de poétique médiévale*, pp. 455–8.

³⁶ Cf. *Graelent*, ed. Burgess and Brook, lines 655–62.

³⁷ *Lanval*, lines 575–612.

³⁸ In this respect, the *fabliau* differs from – or perhaps alludes to – the *Lai de Graelent*, where the queen’s guilt has already been established even before the protagonist meets the *fée*.

³⁹ ‘Vos conterai assez briefment’ (Marie de France, *Guigemar*, in *Lais*, ed. Ewert, line 21).

⁴⁰ Cf. my remarks on the ‘plain-speaking’ of Chaucer’s Merchant in ‘Marriage, Sexuality and the Family’, in *A Concise Companion to Chaucer*, ed. by Corinne Saunders (Oxford: Blackwell, 2006), pp. 218–40 (pp. 228–9).

Thus it could be argued that the very techniques that Marie uses in order to assert the truthfulness of her *Lais* (despite their manifest fictionality) are misappropriated by the *fabliau*-poet in just such a way as to demonstrate how aggressive and abusive tale-telling can be. Indeed, in the sense that *Le Chevalier* might be said to invent a new economy of narrative – not so much ‘tale-telling’ as ‘tail-telling’ – it creates a new source of authority (the ‘con’ itself) that is most directly invoked only by the use of obscenity.⁴¹ In other words, as Howard Bloch has argued, *Le Chevalier*’s identification of the *con* as the source of the *conte* ‘drives home [the point] that the *fabliaux* inscribe their own origin in such a way as to render absurd the questions of source, authorial identity, and destination’ (p. 109). Not only does *Le Chevalier* provide a derisive response to the truth-claims that Marie makes, it also serves as a demonstration of just how readily the sexual dynamics implicit in the fairies-in-the-fountain motif might be reversed. In the *fabliau*, as opposed to the *lai*, the feminine sexuality that is so brutally stripped of secrecy by the knight’s intrusion on fairies’ nakedness is not just an object, something that is looked at and spoken about, but becomes a subject, endowed with a point of view and a voice of its own, so that it is actually capable of answering back. The ‘truths’ thereby revealed are doubly uncomfortable for the implied male reader, not just because they bear out misogyny’s worst fears about women’s secretiveness, but also because they so obviously contrast with the suppression of female perspectives and female voices that is otherwise all too comfortably implicit in the fantasy of the willing *fee*.

In various respects then, comparison with *Le Chevalier qui fist les cons parler* opens up some challenging perspectives on *Lanval*. It would be too simplistic to describe the relationship as one of parody, since that might imply that the *fabliau* only responds to the *lai* at the level of style,⁴² whereas it is particularly at the level of themes and motifs that the *fabliau*-poet’s reading of the *lai* is most subversive. I have found it more useful to think in terms of ‘promiscuous liaisons’, which is a phrase that Barbara Nolan has usefully applied to the parasitical tendencies of *fabliaux*, as they are expressed in what she calls ‘bawdy fiction’s intertextual affairs’.⁴³ According to her analysis, *fabliau* is essentially promiscuous in that it thrives on ‘the conscious juxtaposing of opposed literary forms and cultural codes’ in a way that well fits the *Oxford English Dictionary*’s definition of ‘promiscuous’ as ‘mixed and disorderly in composition or character’.⁴⁴ As Nolan points out, promiscuity also suitably connotes ‘dangerous, unstable liaisons, loose-living women

⁴¹ On the tale/tail pun, see Chaucer, ‘The Shipman’s Tale’, VII. 415, 433–4, in *The Riverside Chaucer*, general editor Larry D. Benson (Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin, 1987), p. 208.

⁴² Cf. the definition of ‘parody’ in the *Concise Oxford Dictionary of Literary Terms*, compiled by Chris Baldick (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990), p. 161: ‘a mocking imitation of the style of a literary work or works’.

⁴³ Barbara Nolan, ‘Promiscuous Fictions: Medieval Bawdy Tales and Their Textual Liaisons’, in *The Body and the Soul in Medieval Literature: The J. A. W. Bennett Memorial Lectures, 10th Series, Perugia, 1988*, ed. by Piero Boitani and Anna Torti (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 1999), pp. 79–105.

⁴⁴ Nolan, ‘Promiscuous Fictions’, p. 88; *Oxford English Dictionary*, 2nd edition (Oxford, 1989), s.v. ‘promiscuous’, (a.).

[and] illicit couplings that resist or defy established mores.⁴⁵ This terminology is perhaps particularly suggestive here, if only in the literalistic sense that the kind of fantasy embodied in *Lanval*, *Graelent* and *Le Chevalier* by the motif of the fairies in the fountain could certainly be described, at least potentially, as a 'dangerous, unstable liaison'. The fairies certainly provide the protagonists of each of the three texts with the means 'to resist or defy established mores' in one way or another. More specifically, it could be argued that sexual promiscuity is deployed by *Le Chevalier qui fist les cons parler* as a means of figuring its own generic promiscuity – the promiscuity with which its 'intertextual affair' with *Lanval* is conducted. But – and this is where I want to add to what Nolan has said – is it actually the case that all the promiscuity in this particular liaison lies with the *fabliau*? Is it not possible that intertextuality of this kind can cut both ways? It is conceivable, I suppose, that one partner in a 'dangerous, unstable liaison' is more promiscuous than the other (and no doubt *fabliaux* are, in general, readier to cultivate such promiscuity than are romances or *lais*); but, in the case of the relations between *Lanval* and *Le Chevalier*, it seems to me that much of the promiscuity resides in the liaison itself – in the nucleus of material that these texts have in common.

It might seem to be stating the obvious to say that the kind of wish-fulfilment fantasy that depends on the availability of semi-naked women in the wilderness, and on the sexual and financial licences that they confer, hardly serves as a very good illustration of refined feelings, no matter how virtuous or admirable any of those semi-naked women might happen to be. (And it has been argued, with some justice, that the role played by the fairy in *Lanval* once the hero has betrayed her is a remarkably dignified one.)⁴⁶ Certainly, no truly virtuous hero would take advantage of a woman encountered in such circumstances, no matter how unambiguously she offers herself to him, if only because there is always a risk that such a woman might turn out to be a demon deliberately seeking to ensnare him through sexual temptation – as sometimes turns out to be the case in medieval romance (and, of course, in medieval hagiography).⁴⁷ Despite that, it is remarkable quite how often the heroes of medieval romance do succumb to sexual temptation (sometimes with truly unforgiveable callousness), but that perhaps only explains why romance texts so frequently feel the need to insist on the duty of knights to protect ladies from dishonourable treatment (which one might otherwise assume

⁴⁵ Nolan, 'Promiscuous Fictions', p. 79, note 1.

⁴⁶ Williams, 'A Damsell by Herself Alone', p. 167.

⁴⁷ See, e.g., Sir Thomas Malory, *Le Morte Darthur*, ed. by Helen Cooper (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), pp. 342–4. Even if otherworldly lovers turn out not to be hostile, involvement with them can still be hazardous, as is illustrated by such romances as Jean d'Arras's *Mélusine*, ed. by Jean-Jacques Vincensini (Paris: Livre de Poche, 2003) and by several of the anecdotes in the *De nugis curialium* of Walter Map (see especially pp. 154–8, 344–8). On medieval attitudes to human/demon miscegenation more generally, see Dyan Elliott, *Fallen Bodies: Pollution, Sexuality, and Demonology in the Middle Ages* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1999), esp. pp. 35–60; Neil Cartlidge, 'Sir Orfeo in the Otherworld: Courting Chaos?' *Studies in the Age of Chaucer*, 26 (2004), 195–226, esp. pp. 209–12; and Neil Cartlidge, '"Therof seyus clerkus": Slander, Rape and Sir Gowther', in *Cultural Encounters in the Romance of Medieval England*, ed. by Corinne Saunders (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2005), pp. 135–47.

to be self-evident).⁴⁸ Indeed, if courtliness is regarded as a socializing ideology – a culture of ‘self-restraint’ and therefore part of a ‘civilizing process’⁴⁹ – then disinhibiting fantasies of the kind marked by the ‘fairies in the fountain’ motif (which are almost implicitly anti-social) can surely only run counter to courtly aspirations. The measure of *Lanval*’s brilliance is that this is not obvious at all. Marie de France somehow succeeds in making the promiscuity implicit in the liaison with the *fée* not just compatible with, but somehow a guarantee of, precisely those aspirations. By the time that Lanval’s mistress stands before King Arthur and lets her cloak fall open so that he can admire the beauty of her body, we have already been so conditioned to read this simply as a means of proving that the knight was telling the truth all along about the existence of his fairy mistress that it becomes all too easy to overlook the sheer voyeurism to which this seductive gesture is designed to appeal:

La damë entra al palais;
Unques si bele n’i vient mais.
Devant le rei est descendue
Si que de tuz iert bien veüe.
Sun mantel ad laissié chaeir,
Que meuz la puissent veer.
(*Lanval*, lines 601–6)

[The lady entered the palace, where no one so beautiful had ever before been seen. She dismounted before the king, and in the sight of all, let her cloak fall so that they could see her better.]

In effect, *Lanval* makes the *fée*’s revealing of her figure equivalent to a revelation of the truth. *Le Chevalier qui fist les cons parler* perhaps deliberately mocks this moment by offering another kind of revelation, another kind of truth-telling. Instead of the elegant and wholly voluntary unveiling of the fairy’s beauty in the *lai*, the *fabliau* presents us with the inelegant and wholly involuntary unmuffling of the lady’s ‘con’ – and its consequent testimony to her attempt at deceit:

Ov un long crok la cotoun
Fyrent trere hors del coun.
Le chevaler al coun demaunda
Purquoy respounce ne ly dona.
‘Sire, je ne purroi verroiemnt,
Taunt fu estranglé vylement.’
(*Le Chevalier*, ed. Short and Percy, lines 269–74)

⁴⁸ See, e.g., Malory, *Le Morte Darthur*, ed. Cooper, p. 57: ‘Then the King established all the knights, and gave them riches and lands; and charged them [...] always to do ladies, damosels, and gentlewomen and widows succour; strengthen them in their rights, and never to enforce them, upon pain of death.’

⁴⁹ Norbert Elias, *The Civilizing Process: Sociogenetic and Psychogenetic Investigations* (first published 1939), trans. Edmund Jephcott, ed. by Eric Dunning *et al.* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2000), pp. 389–90.

[With a long hook they managed to drag the cotton out of the cunt. The knight asked the cunt why it hadn't given him any reply. 'Sir, the truth is that I couldn't because I was so ignominiously suffocated.']

In sum, no matter how elegantly Marie presents it, *Lanval* remains a fantasy – a fantasy that walks a thin line between, on the one hand, imagined brutality of the most repellent kind (such as the rape in *Graelent*) and, on the other, the merest voyeurism. Marie, of course, walks that line with so much delicacy and ironic control as to make it seem wholly inappropriate to read *Lanval* in so hostile a way. *Le Chevalier*, by contrast, exposes her performance as a performance, and with such shameless inventiveness that it seems impossible that anyone could have taken a text like *Lanval* seriously in the first place. Obstinate rejecting the invitation to mystify or romanticize the gender politics implied by a fantasy of power predicated upon a conspicuously naked femininity, the *fabliau* deliberately insists on the physicality of the female bodies that the *lais* prefer simply to look at. In this way it subversively draws attention to the sheer exploitativeness of the *lais*' treatment of the fairies as desirable female figures. At the same time, by ruthlessly appropriating the generic conventions of romance as the raw material for the construction of its cultivatedly bizarre comedy, it subjects texts like Marie's *Lanval* to an exploitativeness entirely its own.

Saracens and Other Saxons: Using, Misusing, and Confusing Names in *Gui de Warewic* and *Guy of Warwick*

Ivana Djordjević

In a genre not known for its faithful representation of reality, including geographic reality, the Middle English and, even more, Anglo-Norman versions of the romance of Guy of Warwick stand out for their surprising fidelity to verifiable geographical fact. This is not to say that there would be any point in trying to recreate the hero's itinerary as he wanders over large parts of Britain, Europe, and the Middle East, for it would soon become obvious that the distances are impossible and the spatial relationships between the numerous places mentioned in the text often confused. But many of these places bear the names of actual geographical locations, and if their exact coordinates are sometimes hard to determine they are at least situated in the correct part of the world, which is more than can be said of many other texts in the same genre.¹

The earliest version of this popular narrative, *Gui de Warewic* (hereafter *Gui*), is a late product in the development of Anglo-Norman romance whose author deftly constructs a vast and realistic theatre of action for his hero by means of prodigal, yet often well-informed, geographical name-dropping. The toponyms and ethnonyms he uses are culled from a variety of sources, both popular (*chansons de geste*, other romances) and learned (historical and pseudo-historical writings of different kinds); and while the role of significant names can be merely decorative, there are times when they are exploited with a specific agenda in mind. In the present study I take a handful of examples of such exploitative toponymy in some of the most structurally important and ideologically resonant episodes in *Gui*'s career and trace their afterlife in the Anglo-Norman romance's late-thirteenth-century redaction and its different Middle English translations; I am interested in whether and how changing these words affects the world they have helped conjure up.

The hero's encounters with a dragon in Northumberland (7227–411) and with the giant Colebrant near Winchester (10,775–11,374) are structurally parallel and occupy especially prominent positions in the narrative.² They bring to a climactic

¹ Judith Weiss has commented several times on the Anglo-Norman romance's comparative geographical precision; see, e.g., 'Insular Beginnings: Anglo-Norman Romance', in *A Companion to Romance from Classical to Contemporary*, ed. by Corinne Saunders (Oxford: Blackwell, 2004), pp. 26–44 (p. 37).

² When not accompanied by manuscript sigla, references to the Anglo-Norman romance are to the text of E (see note 5 below), as printed in the standard edition, *Gui de Warewic: roman du XIII^e siècle*, ed. by Alfred Ewert, CFMA 74–5, 2 vols (Paris: Champion, 1932–3).

conclusion the two halves of the hero's career, public and incognito. The single combat with Colebrant was so greatly enjoyed by its audiences that it quickly became identified with the story as a whole; it proved highly detachable and exploitable, and is found as the story's metonymic representative in a number of later written texts and oral legends. The dragon fight was popular too, securing for Gui a place among the better-known dragon slayers of medieval England.³ By way of comparison and contrast, I will also examine the account of another prominent and popular feat, Gui's victory over the Saracen Amorant outside the vaguely Middle Eastern city of 'Perse' (7857–8974). Since Amorant is a giant and the hero fights him without disclosing his identity, the episode has much in common with the encounter with Colebrant, but its geographic context sets it apart from the two great battles fought in England. As Ralph Hanna points out, the battle against Colebrant is 'an echo' of the 'extensive encounter' with Amorant, just as it is a 'corollary' of the dragon fight, which concludes the first part of the romance.⁴ The iconicity of these three adventures could have been expected to help preserve their toponymic details in subsequent rewritings. This, however, is not always the case.⁵

³ Gui had earlier killed another dragon outside Constantinople, but this episode, shorter and less developed (4122–62), is better remembered for his acquisition of a pet lion, saved from the dragon's predatory attention.

⁴ *London Literature, 1300–1380* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), p. 129. Hanna is writing about the Middle English text in the Auchinleck manuscript, but his comments on these structural elements are equally valid for the Anglo-Norman romance.

⁵ The manuscript tradition of this well-loved story is dauntingly complex. A total of sixteen witnesses of the Anglo-Norman romance exist, ranging from complete texts to single folios and spanning a period of about a hundred years, from the second quarter of the thirteenth century to the beginning of the fourteenth; they preserve what would appear to be essentially two redactions of the romance, α and β. For this article I have consulted and will be referring to the following manuscripts: Cambridge, Corpus Christi College, MS 50 (C); CUL, Additional MS 2751 (J); Cologny-Geneva, Bibliotheca Bodmeriana, MS 67 (M); Cologny-Geneva, Bibliotheca Bodmeriana, MS 168 (F); London, BL, Additional MS 38662 (E), the earliest manuscript of the romance; London, BL, Harley MS 3775 (H); London, BL, Royal MS 8.F.1X (R); New Haven, Yale University, Beinecke Library, MS 591 (B); Paris, BnF, fonds français MS 1669 (P); and Wolfenbüttel, Herzog August Bibliothek, Cod. Aug. MS 87, 4 (G). A reasonably safe assumption is that manuscripts EFMC represent the same early version of the text (α), P and G are a late-thirteenth-century recasting of it (β), while B and R are harder to classify (*Gui de Warewic*, ed. Ewert, pp. xv–xix; Ewert was unaware of the existence of B). The only complete manuscript I have not had occasion to look at is London, College of Arms, Arundel MS 27 (A), most closely related to P. The Middle English tradition is in some ways even more complicated, although there are fewer manuscripts. Alison Wiggins has established the existence of five independent redactions of *Guy of Warwick* (hereafter *Guy*), with three distinct versions represented in the Auchinleck manuscript alone. See Alison Wiggins, 'The Manuscripts and Texts of the Middle English *Guy of Warwick*', in *Guy of Warwick: Icon and Ancestor*, ed. by Alison Wiggins and Rosalind Field (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2007), pp. 61–80 (p. 65). The following manuscripts will be referred to here: Aberystwyth, NLW, Binding Fragments 572 (NLW), dated to the first quarter of the fourteenth century; Cambridge, Gonville and Caius College, MS 107/176 (Caius), dating from the 1470s; CUL, MS Pf.2.38 (CUL), compiled in the 1480s or later; Edinburgh, NLS, Advocates' MS 19.2.1 (Auchinleck), dated 1330–40. The relationships between different Anglo-Norman and Middle English redactions are too complicated to be discussed here.

Gui's combat with the Saracen giant Amorant (7857–8974) lavishly exploits resonant names; it dazzles the readers with names both of famous places and of famous people, plunging them into a world rendered both seductive and distant by its deliberate exoticism. The exoticism, however, is not divorced from historical reality but fed by it, most probably via other texts.⁶ A few of the locations – the sultan's city of Persia ('Perse', 8384), outside which the encounter takes place, Amorant's birthplace in Ethiopia ('Ethiope', 8051), the mysterious region of Greater India, used to evoke a distant boundary ('Inde la Maur', 8353) – belong to fairy-tale Orientalism. The others are all at home in a crusading context: Jerusalem, Antioch, Durazzo, Alexandria, Tyre, Constantinople, and Greece.⁷ The presence of Durazzo and Alexandria, in particular, could indicate an alertness to the two cities' relatively recent rise to prominence in accounts of crusading expeditions. The effect, no doubt intended, is to reinforce, by geographic association, the mistaken impression of Gui as a crusader himself.⁸ Stripped of its evocative toponyms, this would be a giant fight like any other, but the carefully chosen place names inscribe it into the crusading metanarrative and turn it into an episode in the ongoing struggle that fascinated the author's contemporaries.

The author also uses this encounter as an opportunity to associate his hero with the Nine Worthies, a tradition evoked in the careful description of Gui's arms and armour.⁹ Gui wears a hauberk originally presented to Charlemagne on the occasion of his visit to Jerusalem (8390–1); it eventually became a treasured possession of King Triamor's family, after it was stolen by a thief and brought to the conveniently vague 'terre as Sarazins' (8394). Gui's helmet was worn by Alexander when he killed Porus (8405–6). The sword was used by Hector when he massacred the Greeks at Troy (8408–9). And the shield had belonged to the 'rei Daire' (8417),

⁶ In her recent translation of the romance, Judith Weiss assessed the poet's knowledge of geography as 'probably second-hand, and in parts vague'; see *'Boeve de Haumtone' and 'Gui de Warewic': Two Anglo-Norman Romances*, trans. by Judith Weiss, The French of England Translation Series 3 (Tempe, AR: Arizona Center for Medieval and Renaissance Studies, 2008), p. 13.

⁷ The episode begins with Gui's departure from Jerusalem (7861) for Antioch (7867), where he never arrives because his meeting with Count Jonas changes his plans; it ends with Gui and Jonas headed toward Jerusalem again (8917), though their paths diverge before they can get there: Jonas returns to his county of Durazzo (8967) and Gui travels to Greece, where he visits a few local pilgrimage sites and makes frequent trips to Constantinople (8971–4). Triamor, the Saracen king whose champion Gui becomes in this adventure, reigns over Alexandria, which is mentioned several times. And the kingdom of Tyre, invoked once in a comparison (Amorant is stronger than anyone 'el realme de Tyr', 8050), is also the realm of Triamor's late brother, killed in battle by Gui (8286).

⁸ In the excitement of the fight it is easy to forget that Gui is nothing of the sort. The real crusader is Jonas, engaged in a Christian response to a major pagan victory over Jerusalem (7910–12), ambushed and captured as he pursued a Saracen king into the latter's own lands (7921 ff.) but able, as local Christians frequently were, to persuade his captor to hold him for ransom instead of killing him (7948–50), and finally forced to reluctant co-operation with his enemy. If it is true that Gui is prompted by Jonas's plight to undertake the combat as a heathen king's champion, ultimately he acts as a rather opportunistic mercenary.

⁹ See Weiss, *'Boeve' and 'Gui'*, pp. 18–19.

presumably the Darius who was defeated by Alexander.¹⁰ The history-laden arms enhance the stature of the hero at the same time as the fabled lands and cities where these objects originated or were famously used add a special aura to the narrative world in which the hero operates; they push back its already loose temporal boundaries towards legendary time in this story in which Athelstan's tenth-century victories coincide unproblematically with twelfth-century crusading campaigns.

The original author's careful inscription of Gui's victory over Amorant in the crusading tradition and his equally careful placing of the hero among the Nine Worthies later give way to a degree of flattening and stereotyping in the hands of copyists, translators, and *remanieurs* in general. Changes are especially drastic in the Middle English redactions, though the process begins already in at least one late Anglo-Norman manuscript, G. But G is here an exception among Anglo-Norman manuscripts, all of which preserve the toponyms of the Amorant episode remarkably well, apart from a few obvious instances of scribal error or ignorance.¹¹ On the other hand, the G redactor does not conceal his impatience with long-winded narrative, an impatience well exemplified in the description of Gui's arms and armour (8387–418), which he edits out, explaining that he intends to tell the story briefly ('Brefment dirrai le counte', fol. 58^{ra}). Elsewhere too, he is readier than other Anglo-Norman redactors to excise decorative toponyms, and few place names that are not essential to the narrative are spared: gone are Persia, Ethiopia, Greater India, and Constantinople, and one of the two casual mentions of Tyre has been cut. But the names that remain – Antioch, Durazzo, Jerusalem, Alexandria, and that one appearance of Tyre – are all strongly associated with the crusading enterprise. Stripped of the elements of a vague exoticism that situates Gui's exploit outside a 'Perse' that one would look for in vain on any map, the G text presents us with the most consistent and most insistent 'crusadification' of the landscape. Amorant's size is now the only genuinely fabulous element in an episode that could almost lay claim to a historicity of sorts.¹²

Produced not long after the late Anglo-Norman versions, the Auchinleck redaction is often closer to them than to the much later Middle English texts in Caius and CUL. Thus it preserves all references to Durrazzo, which disappears from

¹⁰ It may be worth noting that the author selects the Worthies he brings into the text on the basis of geographic criteria: all are associated with the area of Gui's current activity. Alexander (as well as the associated figure of Darius) and Hector already belong to the medieval East of history and fiction; Charlemagne is brought to Jerusalem in order to be presented with the sword that will end up in Gui's hands.

¹¹ For example, R's 'Pise' where other manuscripts have 'Perse' or 'Perce' (7974) is clearly a scribal slip. And a misreading of E's 'sa regiun' (8081), correctly interpreted as 'son reame' in G or 'sa realme' in P, yields the puzzling 'Saraguse', 'Saragoce', 'Saragune', and even 'Arguse' in B, F, C, M, and R.

¹² Manuscript P, often aligned with G against the others, is here much closer to the witnesses of the earlier redaction of the Anglo-Norman text and preserves the section cut by G.

Caius and is inconsistently present in CUL.¹³ It is the only Middle English text that mentions Constantinople as the site of an earlier combat fought by the hero (112: 3).¹⁴ It is also the only one to keep the reference to Greater India, though as 'Ynde þat cite' (88: 4), a form that betrays the redactor's puzzlement over the strange toponym. And it is Auchinleck that offers the clearest evidence of understanding the hero's association with the tradition of the Nine Worthies, an element of the narrative that breaks down in the late Middle English redactions.¹⁵ On the other hand, it is from Auchinleck that Tyre is missing entirely, while the later manuscripts preserve at least one mention of it – the same as the Anglo-Norman G text. The late redactions likewise follow G in not bothering to specify the location of the combat.¹⁶ And they agree in shifting Amorant's birthplace from the Anglo-Norman Ethiopia to 'Ynde' (Caius 7763, CUL 7577), while Auchinleck moves it to 'Egypt' (62: 4).

Of the dozen or so toponyms used in the earliest version of the story, only three remain stable throughout its later developments: Jerusalem as the target of the infidel attack that ultimately lands Count Jonas in trouble, Triamor's capital of Alexandria – and England. Geographically distant, England is the place by reference to which the hero identifies himself to friend and foe alike, reminding us that even when he fights away from home he takes his Englishness with him. While still fighting incognito and under an assumed name, he tells Triamor that he is 'Engleis', raised 'en Engleterre' (8275–6). Admittedly, Triamor had explicitly asked him where he came from (8273), but the next assertion of his Englishness, to Amorant in the heat of battle,¹⁷ comes in response to the less specific question 'qui es tu?' ('Who are you?', 8589).¹⁸ The culminating assertion of Englishness in this sequence of three carefully graduated revelations is prompted by Amorant's suspicion that his opponent is concealing his real name. Gui responds by revealing

¹³ When Count Jonas first introduces himself in CUL, we hear only that he used to own 'moche lande' (7430), but by the end of the episode he is offering Gui 'the erledame of Durras' (8367), to which he finally returns (8389). The CUL redaction is quoted from *The Romance of Guy of Warwick: The Second or 15th-Century Version*, ed. by J. Zupitza, EETS, ES 25–6 (London: Trübner, 1875–6).

¹⁴ The Auchinleck and Caius versions are quoted from *The Romance of Guy of Warwick*, ed. by Julius Zupitza, EETS, ES 42, 49, 59 (London: Trübner, 1883, 1887, 1891). Passages in the stanzaic section of the Auchinleck romance are cited by stanza and line numbers.

¹⁵ In Caius's intervention the hauberk, no longer associated with any of the great heroes of old, eventually finds its way, specifically and indeed logically, to Triamor's city of Alexandria (8100) instead of a vague 'terre as Sarazins' (8394) or Auchinleck's 'hepenesse' (91: 9). Both Caius and CUL struggle with Porus's name, CUL coming up with the rather desperate 'Fawre' (7923) and Caius with the more flamboyantly romantic 'Priamoure' (8115). And both Caius and CUL describe the shield without saying anything about its previous owner.

¹⁶ For the Anglo-Norman 'Perse' Auchinleck has the geographically nonsensical but for questions of transmission rather interesting 'Espace' (90: 8) – the German city of Speyer, which features prominently in the Anglo-Norman hero's continental adventures but is only sporadically mentioned in the Middle English texts.

¹⁷ 'El regne d'Engleterre fu né' ('I was born in the kingdom of England', 8593).

¹⁸ All translations of the E text are from Judith Weiss's 'Boeve' and 'Gui'. Translations of other Anglo-Norman redactions are mine.

it and reaffirms his English origin in the same breath: 'Gui de Warewic ai a nun / D'Engleterre, la regiu' ('My name is Gui of Warwick, from the realm of England', 8781–2). The careful gradation is not preserved in all redactions, but even CUL, which generally makes a mess of it, retains at least the final and climactic mention of England (8226). In the early sections of the Amorant episode England is similarly foregrounded, as the place where it is logical to seek Gui when one needs him. Triamor sends Jonas to look for Gui and Heral't 'en Engleterre' (8117), and 'Engleterre' is indeed the last point of an itinerary that takes Jonas through 'Alemaigne', 'Loheregne', 'Espaigne', 'Puille', 'Sessoigne', 'France', 'Burgoigne', and finally 'Engleterre' (8135–9). Even though the assumption is contrary to what the reader or listener already knows about the hero, i.e. that he spends most of his time away from England, it is an important indication of how others think of him, and with good reason: because that is how he presents himself to the world. Interestingly, the geographically rather confusing list of evocative place names – a staple of the romance of adventure, where it serves to suggest the geographical exhaustiveness of chivalric experience – is shrewdly reduced by the impatient redactor of G to a single name, 'Engleterre' (fol. 56^{vb}), the only one that really matters here.

Repeated mentions of England reinforce the perception of Gui as 'an English hero rooted in English lands'.¹⁹ And even though the perception is not entirely borne out by the general shape of the narrative, textual details like these have an undeniable cumulative force. As the hero fights a Saracen king's battle in Saracen lands, an encounter in which the audience itself has no personal stake, these details maintain a continuity with other encounters, notably those with the dragon and with Colebrant, both of which rely for their emotional power on the audience's identification with the fictional inhabitants of their own homeland.

The homeland is in grave danger in both these fights, but Gui's single combat with the giant Colebrant is both longer and structurally much more prominent. In a series of encounters of increasing difficulty and moment, this is the hero's last, culminating feat. An episode that acquired a life of its own fairly soon after the romance was composed, it has been a classic example of the narrative exploitation of place for nationalist purposes ever since it was recognized as a displacement of the traditional account of Athelstan's victory over the Danish king Anlaf at Brunanburh in 937.²⁰ The episode's claim to historicity rests on names alone, though with the exception of Winchester those are personal rather than place names. Without 'Adelstan' and 'Anelaf' (presumably Olaf Guthfrithson), there would be little to distinguish this from any other romance fight with a giant. Add the names, and it becomes central to the survival and prosperity of the realm inhabited by the not very distant forefathers of the poem's earliest audiences. The unanimity of the Anglo-Norman and Middle English versions, all of which state

¹⁹ Weiss, 'Boeve' and 'Gui', p. 21.

²⁰ Robert Rouse discusses the battle in several sections of *The Idea of Anglo-Saxon England in Middle English Romance* (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2005). For a good summary of its displacement, see pp. 139–40.

that the invader is the king of Denmark, even if they sometimes have trouble with his name, confirms the importance of this episode as a symbolic representation of the conflict between the 'English' and the Danes.²¹ The impression is confirmed by the contrast between the textual stability of the Danish king and the casual treatment of his principal ally, king Gunlaf of what is probably Sweden ('de Suadthede li reis Gunlaf', 10,798).²² This character, whose name may preserve, in distorted form, that of Guthfrith, Olaf's uncle and his helper in several campaigns against Athelstan, is mentioned only once and quickly forgotten.

But if *remanieurs*' puzzlement over the fleetingly appearing Gunlaf and his home country ultimately results in the character's excision from the text (a natural development considering his narrative insignificance), the problem of the origin of Anelaf's champion is harder to solve. 'Gunlaf' is unstable because his function is purely decorative – Colebrant's origin is so because it is puzzling. The problem here lies in the giant's ethnicity rather than his birthplace, which all redactions except Caius locate in Africa.²³ For Colebrant, we are told, is a 'Sedne'. Ewert glosses the word as 'Saxon, Saracen'; Judith Weiss agrees that it 'can mean Saxon, but "Africa" suggests *Sedne*'s other meaning, Saracen'.²⁴ This is possible and there is a precedent not only for calling invading Danes Saracens but for insisting on their African origin too, as in the early Anglo-Norman *Romance of Horn*, whose influence on later productions in the same genre was considerable. But *Horn*'s Saracens are 'Sarazins', just as the Saracens of *Gui* are 'Sarazins' in all other contexts; only Colebrant is a 'Sedne', a variant of the more common spelling 'Sesne', used elsewhere in the poem (5144) to refer unequivocally to Saxons.²⁵ From a realist perspective, an African Saxon is an irritating impossibility, but there is no

²¹ All redactions likewise gloat over the defeated Danes' ignominious return to Denmark. But the historical Olaf, although a Dane, ruled in Northumbria and Dublin; it is from Ireland that he and his troops had arrived in the campaign that led to Brunanburh, and it is to Ireland that they withdrew after they were routed. In the Anglo-Norman texts his name is given as 'Anelaf', 'Anelad' and 'Hunelaf'. In Auchinleck and Caius he is 'Aulof' or 'Aulofe', but CUL and the early Northern redaction (NLW) omit the name. The latter even demotes him from king to 'duk' of Denmark (2767). The text of NLW is quoted from *Fragments of an Early Fourteenth-Century Guy of Warwick*, ed. by Maldwyn Mills and Daniel Huws, Medium Ævum Monographs, n.s. 4 (Oxford: Blackwell, 1974).

²² Ewert glosses 'Suadthede' as Sweden, but I am not aware of this form being used elsewhere. Anglo-Norman copyists already struggle with the word, which they render as 'Swathede' (B), 'Suathede' (F), 'Suthede' (R), and even 'Sudene' (M), a reading possibly influenced by the *Romance of Horn*. G and P, generally uninterested in details, refer to 'Guzlaf' (G) or 'Gulad' (P) as 'un autre roy' ('another king') of unspecified provenance. The earliest Middle English redaction seems to place the character in Norway, of which only 'Nor[...]' (2768) is left due to manuscript damage; later ones leave him out altogether.

²³ For the author of the Caius text, all giants come from India: Amoraunt, in other versions an Ethiopian, did (7763), and so does Colbrond (10,320).

²⁴ *Gui de Warewic*, ed. Ewert, II, p. 213; Weiss, 'Boeve' and 'Gui', p. 217, note 124.

²⁵ For further examples of geographically displaced Saracens, see Diane Speed, 'The Saracens of *King Horn*', *Speculum*, 65 (1990), 564–95. None of these examples parallel the peculiar use of 'Sedne' in *Gui*. Nor can the word be explained away as a scribal slip, since it occurs at least ten times in this important episode, in which Colebrant is often simply 'le Sedne' (10,807, 10,827, 10,867, 10,881, 10,892, 10,979, 11,017, 11,257, 11,301 and 11,304).

need to assume that strict realism was what the author of *Gui* was after; his poem shows evidence of a different approach to the exploitation of both geographical and historical reality.²⁶ Although he may borrow extensively from respectable historiographers such as William of Malmesbury, and no doubt many others, he also draws heavily on works of whose fictionality there can be no doubt.²⁷ His attempt at world-creation is not unlike that of Geoffrey of Monmouth, of whose work he must have been keenly aware, if not directly then, as is more likely, through the intermediary of Wace. Despite the obvious differences in ambition, intent, and temporal range and focus, we find in *Gui* a similarly compelling combination of verifiable fact and patent impossibility, combined to create a world that could almost pass for real.²⁸ In such a world Athelstan's England is invaded by Danes, as it was in reality, but the invaders are represented by a Saxon giant, who could have been borrowed from Wace. When the Saxons first arrive in England, Wace follows Geoffrey of Monmouth in describing them as very tall, worshippers of alien gods, and eventually willing allies and paid helpers of Britain's foreign invaders. Their leaders, Henguist and Hors, are 'dui frere de grant estature' ('two brothers of great height', *Brut* 6709). A generation later in the long history of their hostility to the Britons, the Saxons are led by one Colgrim, whose name is too similar to Colebrant's for the latter to be entirely coincidental (*Brut* 8915).²⁹ If *Gui*'s Saxon giant comes from Africa, this may be simply because that is where giants come from in so many other stories. After all, *Gui* himself has already dispatched an African giant, Amorant, by the time he faces his 'Sedne' cousin.

It is easy for us to resort to historical hindsight and conclude that a 'Sedne' is either a Saxon or, less likely, a Saracen. But what seems obvious to us was less so to some of the scribes and translators who worked on different versions of the *Gui* narrative. Manuscripts E, C, M and F all preserve the word throughout, but others avoid it altogether or, more interestingly, visibly struggle to make sense of it. Thus G and P agree in referring to the Danish champion as either 'le geant' or 'Colebrant', and in this they are followed by the Middle English Auchinleck, Caius and CUL. The scribe of B renders the word as 'Ceigne' when he first encounters it (fol. 74^{vb}), then he tries 'Seigne' (fol. 75^{ra}), before settling on 'Seine' (fol. 75^{rb}). None of his spellings indicate that he had any idea of what the word meant. The scribe of R, on the other hand, resorts to logic and comes up with 'soudour' ('mercenary', fol. 154^{va}), which he uses consistently until his concentration flags and he

²⁶ Admittedly, the formulation of this statement does leave room for dismissing the information as a rumour: '*Ço dient qu'il est de Alfrike né*' ('*People said he was born in Africa*', 10,808; my italics).

²⁷ Plundering earlier texts is the essence of the *Gui* poet's compositional practice. We can only speculate, and that in a limited way, about how carefully he (and his audience) differentiated between fiction and historical fact. It is more important to recognize the peculiar nature of the world brought into being by his wide-ranging borrowings than to segregate meticulously the real from the fanciful in it.

²⁸ Many were indeed taken in by Geoffrey of Monmouth's concoction, which benefited from the added *gravitas* of Latin.

²⁹ Wace, *Roman de Brut: A History of the British*, trans. by Judith Weiss (Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 1999). For further examples of the *Gui* author's possible borrowings from Wace, see Weiss, 'Boeve' and 'Gui', p. 14, note 37.

lets slip a 'Sedene' (fol. 155^{ra}), follows it by a 'duc' (fol. 155^{ra}) and finally resolves on 'Sedne' (fol. 155^{vb}), although by then this designation sounds more than a little odd. Even more commonsensical is the solution hit upon by the scribe of the English manuscript NLW, in which Colbrand is 'ay knyht. of Danma[r]k' (2871). But this logical explanation contradicts the earlier statement that the giant was 'born in Affrike' (2776), faithfully taken over from the Anglo-Norman original.

It is obvious that for several scribes who worked on later redactions of the story, the word 'Sedne' in this context was a puzzle not easily solved by the realization that it really meant 'Saracen'. Were they wondering how a Saracen came to be employed by the Danish king? Or were they, rather, troubled by the incongruity of an African *Saxon*? The latter seems to me likelier, as no manuscript in either language substitutes 'Saracen' for 'Sedne'.³⁰ Of course, it is also possible that the rewriters simply had no idea what to make of the word. But Colebrant's troublesome Afro-Saxon ethnicity in the earliest version of the story cannot easily be explained away: it has to be accepted on its own terms, as part of the poem's peculiar – and peculiarly successful – blend of the real and the literary. The price of success, however, is the loss of textual details from subsequent redactions. These sometimes end up being written out because they are too realistic and reality has changed, but sometimes because they are too bookish and the books have changed too: those read by the original author are no longer as accessible to his literary heirs. In struggling to make sense of Colebrant these later writers will not think of Wace and his Saxons, as they probably have not read Wace's *Roman de Brut*. On the other hand, they are used to African-born giants in other popular texts, have already encountered one in Amorant, and dutifully preserve this seemingly uncontroversial detail.

Unlike Amorant's ethnic background, the location of the climactic fight remained the same throughout the development of the *Gui* tradition: Winchester, a very good choice for an exercise in patriotic mythmaking, which this episode was clearly meant to be. Closely associated with the Anglo-Saxon past and still going strong in the early decades of the Norman era, the ancient capital of Wessex was declining in real importance by the time *Gui* came to be written. On the other hand, it was well on the way to becoming a rich signifier and a focal point for collective memory; it had the right combination of past glory and present semi-obscurity that made it ripe for fictional exploitation. The *Gui* author made excellent use of this quality in his imaginative relocation of the battle of Brunanburh and its recasting as a single

³⁰ This would have been easy since, as Diane Speed points out, Saracen giants are frequently to be found in *chansons de geste* – a rich repository of narrative motifs from which the *Gui* author helped himself liberally. Speed also notes that the early use of the word 'giant' in English 'seems to be associated more with Saracens than with other groups' and that 'it appears that a similar situation pertained when the word passed from Late Latin into Old French' ('The Saracens of *King Horn*', p. 579).

combat.³¹ That this worked is, of course, not due solely to Winchester's aura, but the stability of the toponym in the textual tradition suggests that the choice helped. Indeed, over time Winchester acquired such authority that in a late reworking of the romance it displaced York, originally equally carefully chosen, from its central position in the earlier episode of the dragon fight (see below).

Textual details like the African Saxon may point at some of the sources used by the *Gui* author and illustrate the complexities of the romance's textual transmission. Others, just as intriguing, tell us much about the author's own brand of historical and geographic exploitation. An especially good example is the historically symbolic city of York, which ends up being written out of the tradition altogether.

Half-way through his adventures and not long before his marriage to Felice, Gui returns one more time from the continent. He goes straight to York, to pay his respects to King Athelstan, who greets him with great joy:

A *Everwic* s'en va tut dreit,
U li reis Adthelstan esteit.
Cum il ert a *Everwic* venu,
A mult joie i est receu.
(lines 7231–4; my emphasis)

[He went straight to York where King Athelstan was. When he came to York, he was received with great joy.]

Not long afterwards, news reaches Athelstan's court of the arrival of an Irish dragon, which has settled in 'Northumberland' and is terrorizing the population (7249–57). This is a perfect job for Gui, who despatches the reptile in the usual way, chops off its head and brings it back to York as a gift to Athelstan. It is here in York that the head is hung for all to marvel at:

A *Everwic* puis s'en ala,
Al rei le chef presenta;
[...]
A *Everwic* unt le chef pendu,
A grant merveille l'unt tenu.
(lines 7403–8; my emphasis)

[Then he went off to York and presented the head to the king. [...] They hung up the head in York and considered it a great wonder.]

If we turn to the Middle English texts, however, we find that York has lost its claim to fame: in fact, it seems to have been excised from the story altogether. In *Auchinleck* and *Caius* (7129, 7131, 7300, 7305) York has become Warwick. This seems like a straightforward translator's error, due to unfamiliarity with 'Everwic', the French name for York, and its similarity with 'Warwick'.

³¹ In chapter 6 of *The Idea of Anglo-Saxon England* (pp. 134–56), Robert Rouse offers an illuminating account of the city's history and the narrative shaping of its significance, including the role that the story of Guy of Warwick played in it.

Admittedly, we do find 'Everwic' or variations thereof in English texts roughly contemporary with Auchinleck, but nearly all are *Brut*-derived chronicles in which the etymological connection between the city and its mythical founder Ebrauc has been preserved; and even there, '3ork' does appear as a frequent variation.³² As '3ork' is much more common in English, it is easy to assume that the substitution of 'Warwick' was due to a translator's carelessness or ignorance. While this possibility cannot be excluded, it turns out that there are similar slips in various Anglo-Norman manuscripts too. If Auchinleck and Caius give us four occurrences of 'Warwick' for the four occurrences of 'Everwic' in E, so do M and F, both of which have 'War(e)wic' throughout. At some point a scribe must have misread 'Everwic' as 'Warewic' and never noticed that something was amiss.³³ The error does not occur in the fragmentary J, which contains only the second of the two relevant passages; in it the city is, correctly, York and we could assume that this was the reading of the first passage too. But C shows that this is not necessarily the case: there we find the scribe making an initial outing to 'Warewik' before returning to 'Eu[er]wik', where he remains, though without going back to correct the mistake; we cannot quite tell whether he even realized that the first occurrence of the place name was wrong. In B, however, we are able to follow the scribe as he corrects his errors. He begins by writing 'Warwic'. A few lines further down the name is correct but Warwick is still at the back of the scribe's mind, as the spelling of 'Ewerwic' with a 'w' instead of 'u' indicates. He then realizes his earlier mistake and goes back to correct it, adding an initial 'e' to 'Warwic', which now reads 'Ewarwic'.³⁴ By the time he reaches the second passage he knows exactly what he should do and produces two perfectly straightforward spellings of 'Euerwic'.

In the Middle English it is not until the late fifteenth century that the dragon's head is restored to York, albeit in a roundabout way – via Winchester. In CUL, a redaction which at this point is unrelated to those in Auchinleck and Caius, Guy finds Athelstan in 'Wynchestur' (6805) and presumably sets out from there to fight the dragon. (In this text the dragon is not in Northumberland; in fact, it could be anywhere.) It is, however, to '3orke' (6961, 6965) that he returns with the dragon's head – an inconsistency that the scribe (or translator, or redactor) never noticed. The most striking variation takes us back, as so often, to the late Anglo-Norman redaction in G and P, where everything is moved to 'Londres' ('Lundres' in P), even though the dragon is still to be found and fought in Northumberland.³⁵

Can we account for these differences, especially when they are not obviously due to scribal error? Do any of them make sense? 'Warwick' clearly does not, but

³² These texts include the *Anonymous Short English Metrical Chronicle*, as well as the chronicles of Robert Mannyng, Thomas Castleford and Robert of Gloucester.

³³ The confusion of 'Everwic' with 'Warewic' is not confined to manuscripts of *Gui*. See, for example, A. J. Holden's note on line 15,059 in his edition of *Waldef* (Cologny-Geneva: Fondation Martin Bodmer, 1984), p. 312.

³⁴ Fol. 50^{va}. The 'e' is clearly an addition, as it occupies the narrow ruling frame, a space otherwise left empty for the customary gap that separates the initial letter from the rest of the line.

³⁵ G fols 49^{vb}, 50^{vb}; P fols 32^{vb}, 33^{rb}.

it is an easy mistake to make: to a copyist who is working fast and not paying too much attention, 'Everwic' does look like 'War(e)wic'. An unthinking scribe who has by then written 'Warewic' dozens of times could easily not notice that this time the toponym is out of place. And out of place it certainly is, because Warwick was never associated with Athelstan, in addition to being an unlikely base for an expedition to Northumberland. But even if the error is scribal in Anglo-Norman texts, that does not necessarily mean that the Middle English redactions simply inherited it and continued to transmit it: the confusion between 'Everwic' and 'Warwick' is just as likely to occur in translation, though the main reason would here be difference ('Everwic' vs. 'Ȝork') rather than similarity ('Everwic' vs. 'Warewic').

CUL's Winchester, however, is a different matter altogether. Geographically it makes even less sense than Warwick, which may be why this version leaves out Northumberland. But by the late fifteenth century, the date of CUL, Winchester has the weight of tradition behind it. It is strongly associated with Athelstan and therefore a logical place for him to be, but it is just as strongly associated with Guy as the site of his last and most memorable exploit – the fight with Colbrond. To move the location of the dragon fight to the vicinity of Winchester is to resort to tradition in order to explain whatever apparent illogicalities the original may have presented, including the unexpected connection between Athelstan and York. Although the change to Winchester was most probably the intervention of a translator or a Middle English copyist, we cannot be absolutely certain about that. There is at least a theoretical possibility that the change was introduced in a very late Anglo-Norman manuscript, that is, late enough for Winchester to have acquired its pre-eminent position in the popular imagination as the place always mentioned in the same breath with Guy. To replace York with Winchester is an example of explication by reference to legendary stereotype, a common practice in the transmission and translation of popular vernacular texts. But a textual conundrum can also be solved by reference to contemporary reality, as in GP, whose redactor substitutes London for the apparently mystifying York. The logic here seems to be that if London is now the obvious place for the king to be, it can serve as a metonym for the seat of any king of England, including Athelstan.

Whatever the reasoning behind individual interventions, it is clear that for some late redactors of the romance the association of York with Athelstan was illogical enough to require revision; yet the toponym was sufficiently convincing to remain the dominant reading in most Anglo-Norman manuscripts – a consistency that requires explanation. York is not a name to conjure with in the world of romance, whether Anglo-Norman or Middle English, but its geographic position is just right: if the hero is off to fight a dragon in Northumberland, surely he will set out from York rather than Warwick, London or Winchester. This is not the only argument in York's favour, though; there may also be historical reasons for its use here. Just as Guy's fight with Colebrant has been persuasively read as a kind of displaced doubling of the battle of Brunanburh, the fight with the dragon could have been a similar displacement of another episode in Athelstan's career.

In 919, eighteen years before Brunanburh, York was stormed by Rægnald, a Norse adventurer who had been operating in northern Northumbria for a while, and who established in York a line of Norse kings closely related to and allied with the Norse kings of Ireland, with whom they maintained regular communication.³⁶ When Rægnald's successor Sihtric died in 927, his son Olaf found himself in trouble and looked for support to his uncle Guthfrith, king of the Irish Norsemen, who came over from Dublin to lend a hand. In response, Athelstan invaded Northumbria, drove Olaf to Ireland and Guthfrith to Scotland, and took possession of York. As A. G. Dickens points out, it was the first time since the departure of the Romans that York was 'under the actual control of a ruler of southern Britain, whose overlordship was recognized by virtually the whole island and who was linked by marriages and alliances with the principal continental states'.³⁷ York is the 'only northern place' at which Athelstan is known to have held court in peacetime, as noted by William of Malmesbury, who mentions not only Athelstan's destruction of 'the fortress which the Danes had formerly fortified in York' but also, on another occasion, the arrival of gift-bearing messengers from the king of Norway, who were 'royally entertained in the city of York'.³⁸ Details of a Frankish embassy in 936 are recorded by continental chroniclers, such as Richer of Reims, who wrote in the latter half of the tenth century.³⁹

The author of *Gui* could easily have taken Athelstan's connection with York – as well as with Irish-bred trouble in Northumbria – from his own reading of historical sources. As already noted, there is plenty of evidence of his interest in historical matters, an aspect of a wide-ranging and well-informed curiosity. To say this is not to make great claims for the historicity of the narrative, except in a limited and largely decorative sense, but there is no doubt that the author liked to parade his easy familiarity with history, geography and current affairs, and that his earliest audience was no doubt equipped to appreciate the often surprising accuracy of individual instances of such name-dropping in what is above all a fast-paced adventure story.

The *Gui* author's interest in history thus explains not only York as an isolated place name but also its connection with Ireland, the source of the menace, and 'Northumberland', the theatre of action. The co-presence of these three toponyms could plausibly be read as a romantic fictionalization of Athelstan's Northumbrian campaign against the Irish Norsemen, culminating in the capture of

³⁶ My summary is heavily indebted to A. G. Dickens, 'York Before the Norman Conquest', in *Victoria County History of Yorkshire: The City of York*, ed. by P. M. Tillott (London: Oxford University Press for the Institute of Historical Research, 1961), pp. 2–24.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 11.

³⁸ *Ibid.*; William of Malmesbury, *Gesta Regum Anglorum*, quoted from *English Historical Documents*, c. 500–1042, ed. by Dorothy Whitelock (London: Eyre & Spottiswoode, 1955), pp. 280–1.

³⁹ *English Historical Documents*, p. 316, note 5.

York.⁴⁰ The stability of Ireland and Northumberland in the poem's transmission was significantly helped by the fact that the two toponyms are conveniently yoked by rhyme, but the more loosely moored York eventually disappeared.⁴¹

The changes brought by rewriters to the evolving versions of the story of Guy of Warwick are fascinating in themselves and reveal much about the way that copyists, translators, and *remanieurs* try to make sense of episodes and details that do not make sense at first glance. But to return to the question with which I opened my inquiry: how do small changes in toponymy affect our perception of the narrative world portrayed? Paradoxically, it turns out that manipulation and exploitation of toponymy has less impact on the geography of the narrative than on the representation of history in it. When Middle English redactions, or the late Anglo-Norman text in G, reduce the toponymic richness of the fight with Amorant, they strip the story's Middle Eastern setting of its claim to crusading topicality and push it toward fairy-tale vagueness. When, in the dragon-killing section, G and P replace York with London, they give us an Athelstan who has been standardized by reference to more recent English kings. And when CUL suppresses York in favour of Winchester, it offers us an Athelstan standardized by reference to myth – though the myth is not so much that of Athelstan himself as of Guy of Warwick. This is a measure of the sheer success of the story and its popularity more than two-and-a-half centuries after it was first written down.

But the world of the earliest Anglo-Norman version is different. It is a world in which Athelstan's fame rubs off on Gui, not the other way around. And it is

⁴⁰ 'Is it fantastic', M. Ashdown wondered many years ago, 'to see in the dragon from Ireland which devastated Northumbria and was slain by Guy, apparently in the neighbourhood of York, a "symbolical picture" of Anlaf (Sictricson or Guthfrithson or both), who was so closely associated both with Ireland and Northumbria?': 'The Single Combat in Certain Cycles of English and Scandinavian Tradition and Romance', *Modern Language Review*, 17 (1922), 113–30 (p. 123, note 2). As far as I know, Ashdown's suggestion has not been noticed by later scholars.

⁴¹ 'Ireland', present in all Anglo-Norman and Middle English manuscripts, is among the most stable place names in the poem, and 'Northumberland' is similarly tenacious: nearly all manuscripts specify it as the monster's final destination and the site of Gui's victory. CUL's omission of Northumberland appears to be part of a more radical but ultimately botched relocation of the entire episode. Unlike other Middle English manuscripts, which omit the first mention of Northumberland but pick up the name on later occasions, perhaps by inertia, CUL shows evidence of careful excision: Guy's decision to go to Northumberland is recast as the intention to travel to 'that cuntre' (6847); when he leaves for Northumberland he is said to be going 'to that beste' (6862). The persistence of the Ireland–Northumberland axis is somewhat surprising, as toponyms that occur only once or twice and are not directly associated with any significant action are the likeliest to be written out in transmission. This is certainly the case with Sweden, the land of Anlaf's ally Gunlaf in the fight with Colebrant, and some toponyms in the Amorant episode. Equally surprising, as I have shown, are the variations to which the earliest redaction's 'Everwic' is later subjected. Since this is the place from which Gui sets out and to which he returns, such variations are not at all typical of this narrative. As a rule, rewriters are reluctant to tamper with the beginnings and endings of narrative segments, and the authors of *Gui* and *Guy* versions are no exception. For example, in all redactions except the briskly abbreviating GP, the Amorant episode begins with Gui's arrival in Jerusalem and ends with his return there; similarly, in all of them Gui sets out from Winchester to fight Colebrant and returns victorious to the same place.

also a world in which geography is used for historical purposes, in what I would see as deliberate and careful exploitation. In this world Athelstan's kingdom, sadly reduced in later redactions, stretches from York in the north to Winchester in the south. More interestingly, it coexists with a crusading world in which Alexandria is becoming increasingly important. It is a world that conveniently encompasses both the first half of the tenth century and the latter part of the twelfth. Two of Athelstan's campaigns against Norse invaders, here imaginatively recast as single combats against monstrous opponents, serve as culminating events in the narrative diptych, located firmly on the nation's own territory. At the same time, the hero performs much of his knight-errantry abroad, in foreign lands whose toponyms, both Middle Eastern and European (not discussed here) are meant to evoke a very recent past. By eliding two hundred turbulent years of English history, including the drama of the Conquest, *Gui de Warewic* helps create the illusion of seamless continuity between Athelstan's kingdom at its peak and a contemporary England which may be subject to foreign incursions but is not troubled by the kinds of domestic strife and gross abuse of power that the hero encounters repeatedly on his travels abroad. The multiple ironies and ambiguities of this idealized world, fascinating though they are, are not my subject here, as I was chiefly interested in its toponymic construction and its fate at the hands of rewriters. It should not surprise us that after a hundred or two hundred years most of them did not – and could not – grasp the implications of the original author's exploitation of toponyms, which in *Gui* have more to do with history than with geography. Their own interventions offer us a privileged insight into gaps in cultural understanding as they emerge and widen.⁴²

⁴² I am grateful to the Fonds québécois de la recherche sur la société et la culture for funding research for this article. My research assistant, Jeremy Lakoff, provided invaluable technical assistance in its preparation.

The Exploitation of Ideas of Pilgrimage and Sainthood in *Gui de Warewic*

Judith Weiss

Anglo-Norman romance started to exploit hagiography and the concept of penitential pilgrimage at the beginning of the thirteenth century. The poet of *Gui de Warewic* was a veritable magpie, who picked up, as Dominica Legge has remarked, narrative motifs from everywhere.¹ In particular, when he introduced for the first time to insular romance a hero in the prime of life, fame behind him and a happy marriage before him, who decides to give it all up for a poor, anonymous and nomadic existence, he drew liberally both on figures of martial sanctity in continental fiction and on saints' lives, in both Latin and Anglo-Norman. His knowledge of the latter may have come from the possible context for his writing; this is an idea I want to explore later, in greater detail. But his interest in the penitence and lay sanctity of his hero is superficial and easily discarded: it is there to heighten Gui's moral standing and to lend the romance some dramatic gestures, but it disregards textual cohesion and is easily displaced by the subsequent adventures of Gui's son Rainbrun.²

Gui's abrupt decision to abandon his family and his lands for a worthier life should be seen against a historical as well as a literary background. Between the second half of the eleventh century and the thirteenth, there was a change in attitude towards the lay state. The early Church had disparaged it, and regarded sanctity as the preserve of monks, but later on noble figures who seemed to exemplify the ideal of the *miles Christi* helped rehabilitate activity in the world and encouraged the rise of saintliness among the laity.³ In the eleventh and twelfth centuries there were concerns about chivalric violence and what might be done to expiate it or to transform it.⁴ The early church had deplored war, worrying about how the souls of those who had killed enemies in battle might be saved. Expiation lay along two possible routes: entering the monastic life, like Hugh I of Burgundy, or

¹ M. Dominica Legge, *Anglo-Norman Literature and its Background* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1963), p. 167, quoting *Gui de Warewic: roman du XIIIe siècle*, ed. by Alfred Ewert, CFMA 74-5, 2 vols (Paris: Champion, 1932-3), I, p. viii.

² For an excellent recent discussion of *Gui*'s 'lack of structural integrity', see Rosalind Field, 'From *Gui* to *Guy*: The Fashioning of a Popular Romance', in *Guy of Warwick: Icon and Ancestor*, ed. by Alison Wiggins and Rosalind Field (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2007), pp. 44-60 (p. 52).

³ André Vauchez, 'Lay People's Sanctity in Western Europe: Evolution of a Pattern (Twelfth and Thirteenth Centuries)', in *Images of Sainthood in Medieval Europe*, ed. by Renate Blumenfeld-Kosinski and Tímea Szell (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1991), pp. 21-32.

⁴ See C. Harper-Bill, 'The Piety of the Anglo-Norman Knightly Class', *Anglo-Norman Studies*, 2 (1979), 63-77.

going on pilgrimage; hence perhaps the numerous pilgrimages of Fulk Nerra, the notorious Count of Anjou, to Jerusalem. But by the end of the eleventh century Christianity had found one means of coming to terms with aristocratic violence through the concept of the Holy War and the preaching and justification of the crusades. It was pleasing to God if one fought to recover Christian property, or to defend the Christian Church, or to defend Christian people. Examples of this attitude can be found not just in the way the First Crusade was regarded but also in the actions of the Norman pilgrims who routed the Saracen besiegers of Salerno in 999.⁵ Pilgrims and crusaders are, in fact, very close to each other, almost indistinguishable in texts before the end of the thirteenth century, because both are on a journey (*peregrinatio*), so they are both called *peregrini*, travellers. Those opposite ideals, secular fighter and religious non-combatant, come together in the formation of military orders and in the new cults of military saints. Guibert de Nogent's comment on the First Crusade sums it up:

God has instituted in our time holy wars, so that the order of knights [...] might find a new way of gaining salvation. And so they are not forced to abandon secular affairs completely by choosing the monastic life or any religious profession, as used to be the custom, but can attain in some measure God's grace while pursuing their own careers, with the liberty and dress to which they are accustomed.⁶

Literary representations of these issues have been explored by Valérie Galent-Fasseur, Micheline de Combarieu and Jean-Charles Payen.⁷ Galent-Fasseur (p. 11) emphasizes how many *chansons de geste* give a privileged place to the figure of the pilgrim on his individual search for salvation. Payen and Combarieu primarily draw on the final *chanson de geste* in the cycle of William Short-Nose – the *Moniage Guillaume*. This is one of two narratives cited by several scholars as having particularly influenced the composition of *Gui de Warewic* – the other being the *Chanson de St Alexis*⁸ – so it is worth looking at in more detail.

⁵ *The First Crusade*, ed. by Edward Peters, 2nd edn (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1998), pp. 11–12.

⁶ Guibert Nogent, *Gesta Dei per Francos* (1104–8), in *Recueil des historiens des Croisades: Historiens Occidentaux* (1844–95), IV, p. 124, quoted in Jonathan Riley-Smith, *The Crusades: A Short History* (London: Athlone Press, 1987), p. 11.

⁷ Valérie Galent-Fasseur, *L'Épopée des pèlerins* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1997); Micheline de Combarieu, *L'Idéal humain et l'expérience morale chez les héros des chansons de geste des origines à 1250*, 2 vols (Aix-en-Provence: Publications de l'Université de Provence, 1979); Micheline de Combarieu, 'Ermitages épiques (de Guillaume et de quelques autres)', in *Les Chansons de geste du cycle de Guillaume d'Orange III: hommage à Jean Frappier*, ed. by Ph. Ménard and J.-Ch. Payen (Paris: Société d'édition d'enseignement supérieur, 1983), pp. 143–80; Jean-Charles Payen, 'L'Érémisme dans le *Moniage Guillaume*: une solution aristocratique à la conversion chevaleresque', in *Les Chansons de geste*, ed. by Ménard and Payen, pp. 181–207.

⁸ *Gui de Warewic*, ed. Ewert, I, pp. vii–viii; David Klausner, 'Didacticism and Drama in *Guy of Warwick*', *Medievalia et Humanistica*, 6 (1975), 103–19; Susan Crane, *Insular Romance: Politics, Faith, and Culture in Anglo-Norman and Middle English Literature* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986), pp. 109–15; Velma Bourgeois Richmond, *The Legend of Guy of Warwick* (New York:

The *Moniage Guillaume* has a hero who seeks salvation for his soul not through travel but by entering the monastic life. Guillaume is not like Gui or Alexis in that he does not retire from public life until he is old and a widower. He then first becomes a monk, and finally, when his warlike habits disconcert the other monks, a hermit. Here he does resemble Gui, who spends his final days in a hermitage. Guillaume passes his time constructively – he gardens, he builds a bridge for travellers – but not peacefully, because his talents for fighting are continually called upon. In this way, like Gui's but unlike Alexis's, his secular identity is not allowed to die but is constantly renewed. However, unlike Gui, Guillaume does not expiate his sins through travel. He thus obeys the injunctions of many prominent eleventh- and twelfth-century spiritual authorities, who opposed monks (and sometimes lay people too) becoming pilgrims, except in a spiritual sense. My examples are taken from Peter Damian (in the early 1030s) and Maurice de Sully (bishop of Paris 1160–96):

We urge those who either serve the world as soldiers or who prefer the spiritual army [...] to take the journey of spiritual exile.

What profit can it be to him to go on pilgrimage and travel far from his village if he does not travel far from his sin and vice?⁹

Micheline de Combarieu draws attention to Guillaume's reasons for withdrawing from secular life – that a knight's necessary duty to kill, whether pagans or Christians, endangers his soul – and points to how similarly phrased it is to the speeches of other figures in *chansons de geste* who decide to quit the world. Three passages among many illustrate her point:

Dont s'apensa Guillaume au cort nes
Que mout a mors Sarrasins et Esclers,
Maint gentil home a fait a fin aler;
Or se vaudra envers Dieu amender.
(*Moniage Guillaume II*, lines 45–8)

[Then Guillaume Short-Nose reflected that he had killed many Saracens and heathen; he had brought many noble men to their end. Now he wanted to amend his ways in God's sight.]

Jou ai tant fait de pechiés mortuables,
Tant home mort et tante cité arse,
Terres destruites et castiaus fait abatre,

Garland, 1996), pp. 15, 20, 21, 26; Neil Cartlidge, 'The Unknown Pilgrim: Drama and Romance in the *Life of Christina of Markyate*', in *Christina of Markyate*, ed. by Samuel Fanous and Henrietta Leyser (London: Routledge, 2005), pp. 79–98 (p. 89).

⁹ Peter Damian, quoted in Giles Constable, 'Opposition to Pilgrimage in the Middle Ages', in Constable, *Religious Life and Thought (11th–12th centuries)* (London: Variorum Reprints, 1979), pp. 126–46 (p. 132); Maurice de Sully, quoted in C. R. Cheney, *From Becket to Langton: The Ford Lectures, 1955* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1956, repr. 1965), p. 163.

The Exploitations of Medieval Romance

Que li pecié durement m'en esmaient
Que jou ne voise en infer parmanable.

(*Moniage Guillaume* II, lines 2238–42)¹⁰

[I [Gaydon] have committed so many mortal sins, killed so many men and burnt so many cities, destroyed lands and knocked down castles, that the sin of it greatly worries me in case I go into eternal hell-fire.]

Je vois m'arme sauveir, si vivrai netement.
Par moi sont mort mil homme dont ge sui molt dolent;
Si doi espénir et soffrir maint torment.

(*Renaut de Montauban*, lines 17,911–13)¹¹

[I am going to save my soul, and I will live cleanly. A thousand men have died at my hands, which I bitterly regret; thus I must expiate, and suffer much distress.]

Combarieu's view is that the parallelism of expression indicates a common topos in this period, not an author's particular point of view.¹²

What the poet of *Gui de Warewic* may have learnt from the *Moniage* and other *chansons de geste* was thus not just the plot-details of a withdrawal from the world by a famous warrior but these particular regrets for the spilling of blood, however unavoidable at the time. What he did not consider, I believe, was the inappropriateness of his exploitation of a theme when it belied, through exaggeration, the previous events of his poem. In his wish to make Gui's self-reproach striking, he sacrificed both historical and literary plausibility to drama. Here is the (slightly truncated) passage describing Gui's change of heart and self-justification:

Gui comence dunc a penser
Cum Deus li out fait grant honur,
Unc a chevaler ne fist greignur:
Que unc ne fu en liu n'en estur
Qu'il ne fu tenu al meillur,
E cum il ert home de grant afaire
E preisé en estrange terre,
E que tanz homes avait oscis,
Turs e citez par force pris,
E cum avait sun cors pené
Loinz en estrange regné
Pur une femme qu'il tant amat,
Pur qui tant mals duré ad;
Mais unc pur sun criatur [...]
En sun corage se purpensa

¹⁰ *Les Deux Rédactions en vers du 'Moniage Guillaume'*, ed. by Wilhelm Cloetta, 2 vols (Paris: Firmin Didot, 1906–11).

¹¹ *Renaut de Montauban*, quoted in Combarieu, *L'Idéal*, II, p. 619.

¹² Combarieu, 'Ermitages épiques', p. 150; *L'Idéal*, II, p. 621.

Que tote sa vie changera
E en Deu servise se mettra [...]
'Pur vus ai fait maint grant desrei,
Homes ocis, destruites citez,
Arses abbeies de plusurs regnez [...]
Pur ço sui las e chaitif.
Tant francs homes ai oscis,
En mei sunt li pecché remis;
El servise Deu desore irrai,
Mes pecchez espenir voldrai.'

(*Gui de Warewic*, lines 7574–630)

[Then Gui began to think how God had done him great honour; He had never done greater to any knight, for he was never in any place or fight that he was not considered the best. And he thought of how he was a man of influence, and renowned in foreign lands, and how he had killed so many men, captured towers and cities by force, and had exerted himself far off in strange realms, for the sake of a woman, whom he loved so much and for whom he had borne so much suffering – but never for his Creator. [...] He resolved in his heart that he would completely change his life and put himself at the service of God. [...] 'For you [Felice] I've caused great havoc, killed men, destroyed cities and burnt abbeys in many kingdoms. [...] So I am wretched and despicable. I've killed so many honourable men that the sins remain with me. From now on I shall go on God's service; I want to expiate my sins'.]

Paul Price has looked closely at this reasoning for a change of life, that Gui has killed many men and committed many outrages – exactly what Guillaume, Gaydon and Renaut say – and exposed its flaws. Gui reproaches himself not just for multiple manslaughter but for the destruction of cities and the burning of abbeys in many kingdoms, for *maint grant desrei* (very great disorder). All these sinful deeds have been for the sake of a woman, as he insists at least six times. But most of them never happened.¹³ Gui has hitherto behaved like an exemplary knight, not like a Raoul de Cambrai; he has almost nothing with which to reproach himself. If his account of his old life is suspect, what about the new life he proposes to take up? How credible and sincere is this 'pilgrim'? Indeed, is his proposed course of action one which medieval theologians would have approved?

Gui has managed to convince several critics of his *bona fides* as a pilgrim. He is not called that until quite late in the romance (line 9775) and he does not actually label his penitential journey a 'pilgrimage'; nevertheless it has been seen as one, a 'spiritual seeking' in which his deeds, performed anonymously, are 'against God's

¹³ Paul Price, 'Confessions of a Godless Killer: *Guy of Warwick* and Comprehensive Entertainment', in *Medieval Insular Romance: Translation and Innovation*, ed. by Judith Weiss, Jennifer Fellows and Morgan Dickson (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2000), pp. 93–110.

enemies rather than chivalric opponents'.¹⁴ But other scholars are dubious about Gui the pilgrim. Susan Crane was sceptical of his piety, which she saw as merely an attribute of secular heroism, Gui's penitence enabling him to alter his way of life without rejecting all the values of knighthood. Neil Cartlidge casts doubts on Gui's explanations for his desertion of lands, wife and unborn child, and observes that the romance 'justifies the hero's continual addiction to the course of individual endeavour'. William Calin had already cynically noted that the hero's conversion is primarily due to a desire to relaunch the narrative.¹⁵

I suggest that Gui's unjustified penitence is better understood by comparing him with the heroes of insular romances preceding this one, where numerous motifs associated with crusading or pilgrimage are combined with a striking absence of piety. But before examining these, we could draw attention to the fact that Gui's decision to desert his wife was not approved behaviour for either pilgrims or crusaders in this period. The ascetic peregrination *ex patria* was seen as a means of escaping ties with family and the world.¹⁶ Before a papal decretal of 1201, young married men were discouraged from becoming pilgrims or crusaders, since doing so deprived their wives of their marital rights. Papal policy changed only when Innocent III was persuaded more men were needed to go to the Holy Land:

Theories of the marriage bond followed a relatively consistent line of development up to the pontificate of Innocent III: marriage involved a contractual relationship [... from which] resulted a number of mutual obligations, one of which was the obligation of the marriage debt [...] Neither partner could by unilateral action nullify the other's rights to legitimate sexual intercourse.¹⁷

Secondly, Gui's 'solitary pilgrimage to the Holy Land'¹⁸ is only true in letter, not in spirit. He does say he is going to seek God's saints (line 7736), but he makes the briefest of trips to Jerusalem, like a tourist reluctant to leave his coach:

Par estranges terres ad tant erre
Qu'en Jerusalem esteit venu
Od grant ahan qu'il ad eu.
Par la terre ad puis erre
Les sainz lius revisite.
D'iloec puis s'en turna;

¹⁴ Helen Cooper, *The English Romance in Time: Transforming Motifs from Geoffrey of Monmouth to the Death of Shakespeare* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), p. 92.

¹⁵ Crane, *Insular Romance*, pp. 113–15; Neil Cartlidge, *Medieval Marriage: Literary Approaches, 1100–1300* (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 1997), p. 104; William Calin, 'Gui de Warewic and the Nature of Late Anglo-Norman Romance', *Fifteenth Century Studies*, 17 (1990), 23–32 (p. 26). Field calls attention to 'a continued deferral of closure' in the poem; see her 'From Gui to Guy', pp. 53–4.

¹⁶ Constable, 'Opposition to Pilgrimage', p. 130.

¹⁷ James A. Brundage, 'The Crusader's Wife: A Canonistic Quandary', *Studia Gratiana*, 12 (1967), 427–41 (p. 440).

¹⁸ Cartlidge, *Medieval Marriage*, p. 100; cf. Cooper, *English Romance*, p. 92.

En sun corage purpose a
Qu'en Antioche s'en irra.
(*Gui*, lines 7860–7)

[He travelled through so many foreign lands that he arrived in Jerusalem, having experienced great fatigue. Then he journeyed through the land and visited the holy places. Next, he left that place; he decided in his mind that he would go to Antioch.]¹⁹

It is the restless nature of Gui's travels which strikes us here, not their destinations. One of the *sainz lius* is presumably the site of Christ's crucifixion but, unlike Margery Kempe, pilgrim Gui neither specifies it nor appears to be moved by it; he neither imitates Christ's sufferings nor prays, fasts or gives alms, all prominent features of usual pilgrim behaviour at sacred sites.²⁰ Instead, he heads rapidly for Antioch (a starting point for sea journeys to Jerusalem, but not a site of pilgrimage), where he meets the Christian 'pilgrim' Jonas, through whose agency he becomes the champion of the pagan king Triamor. The Holy Land figures only as the brief preamble to this important episode: Gui fights not 'for God's cause', but because Jonas and his sons are in a fix. In this combat with the giant pagan Amoraunt, one of the high points of the romance, Gui is happy to accept the most sumptuous armour (lines 8387–416), as he will do again later, when fighting the Christian Berard, and the pagan Colebrant (lines 11,021–52). He shows no modest reticence here; like any sensible secular knight Gui accepts the finest tools for the job, which makes onlookers doubt whether he is a pilgrim at all (line 10,025). In Guibert de Nogent's words, he is 'pursuing his own career with the [...] dress to which he is accustomed'.

Gui, Jonas and Gui's friend Terri are all called 'pilgrims' in this section of the romance, and for the most part they are pilgrims merely in the sense of *peregrini*, travellers, the term also used of early crusaders, with no particular piety about any of them.²¹ There is only one scene in the romance that for a moment suggests Gui is any more than a traveller. In his emotional reunion with Terri at a stone cross outside a city, with his battered and cracked feet, Gui looks like a type of Christ, willing to lay down his life for his friend (lines 10,647–708). The poet might here

¹⁹ The same cursory treatment of holy locations is visible in Gui's visit to Constantinople after fighting Amoraunt. Constantinople housed the greatest collection of relics in Christendom, but Gui treats it with casual haste (lines 9393–9). See Jonathan Riley-Smith, 'Peace Never Established: The Case of the Kingdom of Jerusalem', *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 28 (1978), 87–102 (p. 91).

²⁰ See Victor and Edith Turner, *Image and Pilgrimage in Christian Culture* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1978), p. 8: 'A pilgrim is an initiand, entering into a new, deeper level of existence than he has known in his accustomed milieu. [...] To pray, to fast, and to give alms [were] all prominent features of pilgrimage'. The redactor of the Auchinleck manuscript (Edinburgh, NLS, Advocates' MS 19.2.1), perhaps troubled by the absence in Gui of the right kind of religious enthusiasm, introduces an extra trip to Bethlehem and remarks that Guy visits the holy places 'to winne him heuen mede' (44:12); quoted from *The Romance of Guy of Warwick*, ed. by Julius Zupitza, EETS, ES 42, 49, 59 (London: Trübner, 1883, 1887, 1891).

²¹ Edmond-René Labande, 'Recherches sur les pèlerins dans l'Europe des XIe et XIIe siècles', *Cahiers de Civilisation Médiévale*, 1 (1958), 159–69 (p. 160).

have been influenced by the twelfth-century Latin *peregrinus* plays, based on the Emmaus episode in St Luke, where Christ Himself is a pilgrim.²²

This temporarily more serious use of the pilgrim figure in *Gui* finds a parallel in only one preceding insular romance, *Waldef*. In the earlier Anglo-Norman romances, Thomas's *Tristan*, *Horn* and *Boeve de Haumtone*, the pilgrim is above all the *peregrinus*. Sometimes he is the traveller who supplies the hero with clothes and useful information, sometimes he is the hero himself, an exile and temporarily in disguise. The news and advice he purveys is sometimes accepted, just as often ignored. Both reactions make sense because pilgrims were known to be carriers of information, just as they were suspected of being liars, inventors or at best elaborators of the tales they spread.²³ It is from a pilgrim that Horn gets the news about Rigmel's approaching wedding.

Bien diz cum[e] paumer, mençonges vas trovant;
Lei est de pelerin, nul ne mentira taunt;
Ja ne dirront taunt veir ke je-s seie creant.

(*Romance of Horn*, lines 3730–2)

[‘You talk just like a palmer, inventing lies. No one lies as much as pilgrims, who are used to it. They can never speak truly enough for me to believe them.’]

Dressed as a pilgrim himself, Horn conveys truths under the cloak of riddles to Rigmel's bridegroom. Situations where the hero is disguised as a pilgrim allow for satisfying amounts of dramatic irony, since only he and the audience are privy to the exact proportion of truth and fiction in his utterances. Josiane is spun such a mixed yarn by Boeve as palmer; the fiction in it – that Boeve has taken a wife – is of course also designed to test her fidelity. *Tristan*,²⁴ Boeve and Horn thus all find the guise of pilgrim very useful: it relegates them to the margins of society where, so poorly clothed that they cannot be recognized, they are protected, fed, and allowed to speak their mind, even to issue moral criticisms of their hosts (as Horn does on the way the nobility treat the poor). At the same time, their pilgrim's status brings them closer to the objects of their affection and helps them ascertain if their lovers are still faithful – Horn and Boeve explicitly test for virginity.

The poet of *Gui* learnt much from these models, especially about scenes of dramatic irony, but he would have learnt nothing of piety, pretended or real, because there is none. The guise of penitent pilgrim is used by *Tristan*, *Horn* and *Boeve* only to accomplish their own secular ends; they have had no change of heart, and they are not about to withdraw from the world, even temporarily. *Waldef*, however, provided the most powerful insular model for *Gui*. Its editor, Holden, convincingly

²² For this idea and for his subsequent analysis of *Waldef*, I am indebted to Neil Cartlidge's excellent discussion in ‘The Unknown Pilgrim’, pp. 89–93.

²³ See Galent-Fasseur, *L'Épopée*, pp. 19–25.

²⁴ *Tristan* disguises himself as a pilgrim in only one of the remaining fragments of Thomas's poem, lines 789–828, but we know that he used this disguise three more times in the complete text because of the Norwegian *Tristramssaga*, which relies closely on Thomas's version.

argued that its influence upon the later romance was enormous, from details of plot down to close verbal imitations.²⁵ In particular, *Waldef* contains a scene involving a pilgrim who carries news and is also invested with immense moral authority. Appearing at the emperor Guiac's feast, a handsome, old, white-bearded pilgrim denounces his pride and reminds him of the fragility of earthly power and the imminence of death. Though the emperor is anxious to learn more of his wisdom, the pilgrim disappears as mysteriously as he arrived (lines 20,691–806).

Having received the news of his father Waldef's murder and the usurpation of territories in England, Guiac himself decides to abandon his throne. He renounces his worldly goods, releases his prisoners, exchanges his rich garments for a palmer's and takes to the road in rags and bare feet.²⁶ In the light of my earlier illustrations his self-reproaches have a familiar phrasing.²⁷

The grandeur of this episode must have made an impact on the poet of *Gui*, though he could not hope to match it: while his hero may have borrowed part of Guiac's name, he is a count, not an emperor. Nevertheless, he could appropriate some of the substantial stature of the anonymous pilgrim through likewise becoming a bearer of moral lessons and rebukes. Gui is asked by the Holy Roman Emperor how the Eastern Emperor regards him; he answers, adding a stinging rebuke for Reiner's abuses of power, and a lesson on an emperor's duties (lines 9875–86, 9966–70). A little later, he advises his friend Terri of the importance of loyally serving his overlord (lines 10,743–56).²⁸ The status of pilgrim in this romance seems to have little to do with the usual actions of contemporary pilgrims but much more with their heightened standing on their return.

In addition to exploiting pilgrims and pilgrimage in order to enhance his hero's moral standing at the expense of textual plausibility, the author of *Gui de Warewic* also decided to exploit saints' lives – again creating some narrative incoherence in the process. As we have seen, he was probably familiar with the story of St Alexis. But this was far from being the only saint's life he knew:²⁹ his romance shows his familiarity with the habitual patterns and motifs of hagiography, in both Latin and Anglo-Norman. This familiarity might derive from the possible milieu for his writing.

²⁵ *Le Roman de Waldef*, ed. by A. J. Holden (Cologne-Geneva: Fondation Martin Bodmer, 1984), p. 30.

²⁶ On this episode see Rosalind Field, 'Waldef and the Matter of/with England', in *Medieval Insular Romance*, ed. Weiss, Fellows and Dickson, pp. 25–39.

²⁷ *Waldef*, lines 21,529–66. Guiac cites his killing of men and devastation of castles, cities, lands and kingdoms: 'Les armes or larrai ester / U jo me soil tant deliter, / Dunt jo tant tut dis mal fet ai / E tanz francs hummes occis ai, / E tanz chasteals e tanz citez, / Tantes terres e tant regnez / Par mun mesfet sunt desgastez, / Ke ja ne serrunt restorez, / Dunt les mesfez e les pechiés / Me sunt enz en mun cors remés' (lines 21,535–44). [I shall now abandon the arms in which I used to delight so much and with which I always did so much harm and killed so many noble men. And so many castles and so many cities, so many lands and kingdoms are devastated through my misdeeds and will never be restored – these sins and misdeeds are my fault.]

²⁸ For a longer discussion of these passages, see Judith Weiss, 'Gui de Warewic at Home and Abroad: A Hero for Europe', in *Guy of Warwick*, ed. Wiggins and Field, pp. 1–11.

²⁹ Holden (p. 24), points to the influence of the Eustace story on *Gui*, as on *Waldef*, though this primarily concerns the theme of the separated and reunited family.

A common pattern in both Latin and Anglo-Norman saints' lives shows us their protagonists leaving their comfortable worldly existence for anonymity in one or more penitential locations, the last of which may be in or near home; here they die. Their bodies manifest their power by their incorruptibility, by smelling sweetly and performing miracles; they are thus moved from their first burial place to grander sites, often in a religious foundation whose prestige is thereby enhanced. Not only the life of Alexis but also those of Gregory, Gilles and Frideswide show this pattern. Gregory retreats from his parents' home, and tries to hide in the catcombs when elected Pope; the solitary, shy and modest Gilles twice avoids his growing fame by escaping, first to a forest, then to a ditch. The bodies of both, like those of Edmund, Foy and Alexis, are ultimately buried in grand tombs, though initially they may be put in humbler places (Edmund, Foy).³⁰ Frideswide's second Latin Life seems to have been rhetorically reworked so as to emphasize the saint's modesty and desire for anonymity.³¹ Fleeing her suitor, she and her companions take refuge in a wood and an abandoned pigsty, where they spend three years. But the fame that follows miracles brings admiring crowds – 'the light of God cannot remain hidden for long' – so they retreat to Thornbury, a spot overgrown with thorns where Frideswide 'hoped to hide; here she hoped to devote herself to sweet tranquillity and shun the crowds'.³² After more miracles, Frideswide returns to Oxford where an angel tells her of the time she will die; as she dies, a sweet scent fills the town and a paralytic is cured by touching her body.

When Gui abandons his family and fights for others abroad, he tries to preserve his anonymity and only reluctantly reveals himself; he strikingly pursues the same course on his return by visiting his wife's hall and dwelling in her vicinity without revealing his identity. Like Gilles and Frideswide, he hides in uncomfortable, outdoor, places; as with Frideswide, an angel tells him of approaching death; as with her, his body has the odour of sanctity and heals the infirm. And both Frideswide and Gui are translated after death to grander tombs. In Frideswide's case this happened not in legend but in reality: in 1180 Philip, the third prior of the religious foundation she initiated, staged a grand ceremony, attended by king and archbishop, in which the saint's bones were moved from a modest position in the priory's church to a suitably embellished feretory and, once again, a delightful scent supposedly refreshed bystanders. The account of that translation picks up a theme in the saint's life – that the hidden saint is always destined to be sought and revealed – by observing that the feretory allows 'so precious a pearl [...] lie no longer hidden'.³³

³⁰ *La Vie de Saint Alexis*, ed. by Christopher Storey (Geneva: Droz, 1968); 'La Vie de Saint Grégoire le Grand', ed. by Paul Meyer, *Romania*, 12 (1883), 145–208; *La Vie de Saint Gilles par Guillaume de Berneville*, ed. by Gaston Paris and Alphonse Bos (Paris: Firmin Didot, 1881); John Blair, 'St Frideswide Reconsidered', *Oxoniensia*, 52 (1987), 71–127 (the two Latin lives of the saint, A and B, are given in appendices); A. T. Baker, 'La Vie anglo-normande de Sainte Foy par Simon de Walsingham', *Romania*, 66 (1940–1), 49–84.

³¹ See Blair, 'St Frideswide', 73–80, 116.

³² Blair, 'St Frideswide', 77–9.

³³ Blair, 'St Frideswide', 117–19, quoting Text II, Oxford, Bodleian Library, Digby MS 177.

By imagining the translation of Gui's body to an abbey in Lorraine (lines 11,643–56), the romance poet was exploiting a common feature in saints' lives and clearly signifying that his hero had moved towards sainthood.³⁴ In particular, he may have been exploiting the legend of St Frideswide and the account of the translation of her bones because he himself was working in the vicinity.

It is possible that the original romance could have been written in the precincts of St Frideswide's. The priory was probably conducive to literary composition: in the twelfth century it was a centre of learning and artistic taste, whose priors were scholars of repute.³⁵ The ceremony of the translation of Frideswide's bones, described by Philip, the third prior,³⁶ was the climax of efforts in the 1180s to give the priory grander artistic pretensions than before; its new, large, seal depicts the saint enthroned, suggesting she was a personification of learning.³⁷ And the priory's scriptorium housed a scribe, Brother Angier, who translated Latin texts connected with Pope Gregory into French and may possibly have been responsible for the earliest extant copy of *Gui*, London, BL, Additional MS 38662 (the Edwardes Manuscript).³⁸

But until now, it has rather been Oseney abbey which has been favoured as the likely place of production of the original text of *Gui*, and though Ewert fixed upon it primarily because it was founded by the d'Oillis,³⁹ it has perhaps a stronger claim than St Frideswide's to be the birthplace of a popular vernacular narrative. As one of Oxford's greatest corporate landlords, it had important relations with masters and scholars there, and it possessed many more books than St Frideswide's: some

³⁴ See *Saints and their Cults: Studies in Religious Sociology, Folklore and History*, ed. by Stephen Wilson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), pp. 9–11.

³⁵ J. C. Dickinson, *The Origins of the Austin Canons and Their Introduction into England* (London: SPCK, 1950), pp. 175–89; *The Heads of Religious Houses. England and Wales*, ed. by David Knowles, C. N. L. Brooke and Vera C. M. London, 2 vols, 2nd edn (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), I, 940–1216, p. 180. St Frideswide's was later absorbed into the college of Christ Church.

³⁶ Philip was active as prior from 1175 to 1191: Knowles, *Heads of Religious Houses*, p. 180; Blair, 'St Frideswide', p. 117.

³⁷ Christopher Scull, 'Excavations in the Cloister of St Frideswide's Priory, 1985', *Oxoniensia*, 53 (1988), 21–73 (p. 66); Richard Halsey, 'The 12th-century Church of St Frideswide's Priory', *Oxoniensia*, 53 (1988), 115–67; T. A. Heslop, 'The Late 12th-century Seal of St Frideswide's Priory', *Oxoniensia*, 53 (1988), 271–4.

³⁸ Brother Angier tells us he was working in St Frideswide's between 1212 and 1214. His hand has been thought by some scholars to be similar to that of the Edwardes *Gui* and of two other secular narratives, *La Chanson de Guillaume* and the *Pseudo-Turpin*, but there is no agreement about the firm identification of his writing with theirs. See *La Chanson de Guillaume*, ed. by Duncan McMillan, 2 vols (Paris: SATF, 1949), I, p. xvii; Jeanne Wathelet-Willem, *Recherches sur La Chanson de Guillaume*, 2 vols (Paris: Belles Lettres, 1975), I, pp. 39–42; Meyer, 'La Vie de Saint Grégoire le Grand'; M. Dominica Legge, 'La Date des écrits de Frère Angier', *Romania*, 79 (1958), 512–14. I am grateful to Prof. Linne Mooney and Dr Tessa Webber for their help in comparing scribal hands.

³⁹ He suggested that members of the d'Oilli family were patrons for *Gui*: see note 44. For more details of the d'Oillis' patronage of Oseney Abbey, see David Postler, '“Patronus et advocatus noster”: Oseney Abbey and the Oilly Family', *Historical Research*, 60 (1987), 100–2. Despite founding the Abbey in 1129, the twelfth-century d'Oillis seem to have been little interested in it and the first member to be buried there was Henri d'Oilli II in 1232.

thirty still survive from the late twelfth and thirteenth centuries.⁴⁰ And it also possessed a *Vita S. Frideswidæ*, maybe the copy attributed to Robert of Cricklade, second prior of St Frideswide's.⁴¹ The author of *Gui*, then, may have been either here or at St Frideswide's, composing his romance under the influence of elements in her legend and of the account of her relatively recent translation.⁴² He could probably be certain of interest in his romance beyond the confines of the priory and abbey: both establishments were on the edges of Oxford, a city with a developing prestige as a clerical and intellectual centre, which in the late twelfth century and around the turn of the thirteenth was amply catering for patrons of books: those who were interested in a variety of works and wished to have them produced, decorated and bound.⁴³

We can thus consider discarding the earlier theories about this writer's romance celebrating a marriage in the patron family:⁴⁴ no other Anglo-Norman romance

⁴⁰ J. L. Catto, 'Citizens, Scholars and Masters', in *The History of the University of Oxford*, vol. 1: *The Early Oxford Schools*, ed. by J. L. Catto (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1984), pp. 151–92 (p. 158); *The Libraries of the Augustinian Canons*, ed. by T. Webber and A. G. Watson, *Corpus of British Medieval Library Catalogues*, 6 (London: BL in association with the British Academy, 1998), p. 403; N. R. Ker, *Medieval Libraries of Great Britain*, 2nd edn (London: Royal Historical Society, 1964), pp. 140–1; see also the *Supplement to the Second Edition*, ed. by Andrew G. Watson (London: Royal Historical Society, 1987). In the thirteenth century the abbey was bequeathed the Digby MS of the *Chanson de Roland*; it also possessed a Latin version of Plato's *Timæus*, and these two works were then bound together. See *The Song of Roland: The French Corpus*, general editor Joseph J. Duggan (Turnhout: Brepols, 2005), I, part 1, *The Oxford Version*, ed. by Ian Short, pp. 14–18. On Robert of Cricklade, see *Collectanea*, 2nd Series, ed. by Montagu Burrows (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1890), part II, pp. 160–4.

⁴¹ Webber and Watson, *Libraries*, p. 404.

⁴² Some of the stories the *Gui*-poet drew on could have been brought to St Frideswide's or Oseney from other foundations, since religious houses often borrowed works from other libraries; see R. M. Thomson, 'The Library of Bury St. Edmunds Abbey in the Eleventh and Twelfth centuries', *Speculum*, 47 (1972), 617–45 (p. 642). William of Malmesbury visited the priory (see Rodney M. Thomson, *William of Malmesbury* (Woodbridge: Boydell, 1987 and 2003), p. 73); he had read Paul the Deacon's *Historia Langobardum* and may have passed on to St Frideswide's or Oseney one of its stories, the folk-tale of the little animal which emerges from the sleeping King Guntram's mouth to discover a treasure in a nearby hill; on waking, the king can find and use it. See Thomson, *William of Malmesbury*, p. 202, and Paul the Deacon, *History of the Lombards*, trans. by William Dudley Foulke, ed. and introd. by Edward Peters (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1974), book III, ch. xxxiv, p. 147. This story is the origin of the episode of the weasel and the treasure in *Gui*, lines 9751–828.

⁴³ See M. B. Parkes, 'The Provision of Books', in *History of the University of Oxford*, vol. II: *Late Medieval Oxford*, ed. by J. L. Catto and Ralph Evans (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992), pp. 407–83 (p. 413); R. W. Southern, 'From Schools to University', in *History of the University of Oxford*, I, pp. 1–36 (pp. 12–24), and Catto, 'Citizens, Scholars and Masters', p. 158. Parkes draws attention to three twelfth-century 'masters' (a *magister* was a person with some sort of academic qualification), Aluredus, Robert de Chesney and Alfred of Hamelhamsted, who owned books and were interested in canon law, theology and literature (p. 408).

⁴⁴ Theories about the author, dating and patronage of the romance have changed since Alfred Ewert first edited it. He thought it was written between 1232 and 1242 to celebrate the marriage of Henry II d'Oilli and thus was probably by a monk from Oseney abbey, founded and patronized by that family (I, pp. v–vii). Ewert's conclusions about the dating and patronage of *Gui* were challenged by Holden, who drew attention to *Gui*'s close dependence on *Waldef* (1200–10). Emma Mason pointed

has been proven to do any such thing, and this one, describing mid-way the abandonment of a marriage by its hero, seems an unlikely candidate. Instead, we could think of it as celebrating a layman who turns into a saint. Unfortunately the poet ignores narrative consistency in his desire to emphasize just how saintly Gui is. First his hero sends instructions to his wife, Felice, that he should be buried in the wood near Warwick. His supernatural powers are demonstrated when attempts to move the body are unavailing, whereupon Felice insists his wishes be respected. After her death and burial next to him, the romance appears to end, with an AMEN and conventional prayer for poet and audience:

Ensemble sunt en la compaignie
De Nostre Dame, sainte Marie;
E issi nus doinst Deu servir
Ke en sa glorie puissum venir. Amen
(lines 11,629–32)

[They are together, in the company of our Lady, St Mary, and thus may God grant us so to serve Him that we may come to His glory. Amen]

The subsequent arrival of Terri, who removes Gui's body to an abbey on the Continent, is completely inconsistent with what has just happened. It suggests that the poet wrote the account of his hero's reburial some time after he composed the description of his death. Perhaps in the interim the poem thus far became extremely popular, and the author was persuaded to write a sequel, one which dealt with the adventures of Gui's son Rainbrun.⁴⁵ He chose to do this by exploiting the final feature of the story of St Frideswide – her translation – and applied it, regardless of coherence, to the start of the last portion of the romance. Ironically, by the time we get to the end of the adventures of Rainbrun, we have almost forgotten about Gui as pilgrim or Gui as saint. The poet puts in a coda to ensure we remember:

De Guiun nus aprent l'escrit,
Ço fu la sume de sa valor,
Qui tut guerpi pur sun criatur.
(lines 12,920–2)

[What the book tells us of Gui is that the essence of his worth was to forsake everything for his Creator.]

This brings together pilgrim and saint in a memorable way. If Gui has not been

out that Margery, the bride in the marriage Ewert suggested, was dead by 1205, and Wallingford castle, to whose restoration the poem refers, was renovated not just in 1242 but in 1215; see Emma Mason, 'Legends of the Beauchamps' Ancestors: The Use of Baronial Propaganda in Medieval England', *Journal of Medieval History*, 10 (1984), 25–40 (pp. 30–1). Mason's genealogy of the d'Oilli family has recently been revised: Margery seems to have been the mother, not the wife, of Henri d'Oilli (d. 1229), who married Philippa Basset in 1205; see Rosie Bevan, 'A Realignment of the 12th and 13th century Pedigree of the Earls of Warwick', *Foundations*, 1 (2004), 194–7. I am very grateful to Dr Carol Harding and Dr Yin Liu for bringing me up to date here.

⁴⁵ See Weiss, 'Gui de Warewic', in *Guy of Warwick*, ed. Wiggins and Field, pp. 10–11.

entirely convincing in either role, that does not seem to have been the poet's concern. In his exploitation of acts of renunciation from previous hagiographic and secular texts, narrative plausibility takes a back seat to superficially enhancing his hero's moral standing; in his use of characteristics of sanctity, it does not bother him that his hero is not especially saintly. The striking gesture is all.

Chanson de geste as Romance in England

Melissa Furrow

Chansons de geste have long been appropriated by national sentiment, although the nationality in question has traditionally been French, as in Robert Bossuat's stirring formulation about the *Chanson de Roland* in a volume of French literary history from the 1950s:

French in its origins, in the character of its protagonists, and in the nature of the sentiments it expresses, the *Song of Roland* is, more than any other poem, the true epic of France. Chivalric honour, the importance of one's word, love of the fatherland, and the glory of the Lord are its essential impulses. In it we sense the passionate soul of a youthful people stirring, ready to make every sacrifice to fulfil its destiny.¹

Undoubtedly *chansons de geste* did play an important role in France. They played an important – but different – role in insular literature, too. From the beginning of Anglo-Norman culture, the story of Roland at Roncesvalles was cultivated in England and used to bolster Norman cultural pride, to the extent that the mythically depicted Charlemagne who warred against the Saracens became imaginatively linked to the conqueror William as well as to the crusaders who took Jerusalem.² The earliest manuscript evidence we have of the emergence of the *chansons* into written form suggests that it was largely in England that it first happened, as does the formal heterogeneity of those of insular origin. Yet in England, though widely read, *chansons de geste* never formed a separate genre, and evidence suggests they were not distinguished from romances. *Chansons de geste* had a peculiar function in insular literary and generic history, and were central to the formation of the genre of romance in England for both writers and readers.

The earliest of the *chansons de geste* extant is of course the Oxford version of *La Chanson de Roland*; the manuscript is generally dated to the second quarter of the twelfth century. At around the same time as its transcription, William of Malmesbury puts the story of Roland in a context that gives it two functions: putatively inspiring emulation on the battlefield among the invading Normans of 1066, and promoting identification between Charlemagne's followers and William of

¹ 'Français par ses origines, par la qualité de ses personnages, par la nature des sentiments qui s'y expriment, le poème de *Roland* est plus que tout autre la véritable épopée française. L'honneur chevaleresque, le respect du serment, l'amour de la patrie et la gloire du Seigneur en sont les ressorts essentiels; on y sent vibrer l'âme ardente d'un peuple jeune, prêt à tous les sacrifices pour accomplir sa destinée.' Robert Bossuat, *Le Moyen Âge*, Histoire de la littérature française, general editor Jean Calvet (Paris: Del Duca, 1955), p. 25.

² See below, pp. 60–2.

Normandy's.³ He wrote that a song of Roland was sung at Hastings, without specifying who sang it but declaring why it was sung: 'Then they struck up the song of Roland to fire them as they went into battle with the example of a heroic warrior.'⁴

The context makes this singing part of a larger pattern of ungodly behaviour on the part of the English and godliness on the part of the Normans:

The English – so I have heard – spent a sleepless night in song and was-sail, and in the morning moved without delay against the enemy [...] The Normans on the other hand spent the whole night confessing their sins, and in the morning made their communion. [...] The duke, with a confident air and loudly affirming that God would be on their side because their cause was just, called for his armour. (I, pp. 453–5)

Implicitly, the duke in his righteousness is a Charlemagne to his followers' Rolands.

Around 1170 Wace combines the story of the singing with the tradition of a jongleur named Taillefer in his *Roman de Rou*:

Taillefer, qui mult bien chantout,
sor un cheval qui tost alout,
devant le duc alout chantant
de Karlemaigne e de Rollant,
e d'Oliver e des vassals
qui morurent en Rencevals.⁵

[Taillefer, who sang very well, on a horse that galloped quickly, went singing in front of the duke of Charlemagne and Roland and Oliver and the vassals who died at Rencesvals.]

As William Sayers puts it, 'the reference to Charlemagne's battle of Christian right against pagan wrong served in Wace's history to legitimize William's cause. T[aillagefer]'s song "de Karlemaigne e de Rollant, e d'Oliver" (8016–17) is the audible

³ William of Malmesbury wrote his account of the invasion sometime around 1124, when he finished his first version of the *History of the English Kings*. For the complicated (and approximate) dating, see R. M. Thomson and M. Winterbottom, 'Introduction' to William of Malmesbury, *Gesta regum Anglorum: The History of the English Kings*, ed. and trans. by R. A. B. Mynors, completed by R. M. Thomson and M. Winterbottom, 2 vols (Oxford: Clarendon Press 1998–9), II, pp. xvii–xxxv.

⁴ William of Malmesbury, *Gesta regum Anglorum*, I, p. 455.

⁵ *Le Roman de Rou de Wace*, ed. by A. J. Holden, 3 vols (Paris: Picard, 1970–3), II (1971), lines 8013–18. On Taillefer, see William Sayers, 'The Jongleur Taillefer at Hastings: Antecedents and Literary Fate', *Viator*, 14 (1983), 77–88. As 'Incisor-ferri' he is first mentioned in one of the earliest accounts of the battle, Bishop Guy of Amiens's *Carmen de Hastingae Proelio*, now thought to have been written as early as 1067. For issues connected with the dating, see the edition and translation by Frank Barlow, *The 'Carmen de Hastingae Proelio' of Guy Bishop of Amiens* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1999), p. xl. Sayers traces the story of Taillefer from the *Carmen* through a series of early to mid-twelfth-century versions of the battle; in those by Gaimar (before 1140), Henry of Huntingdon (before 1154), and Robert of Torigni (after 1139, following Henry's version), Taillefer appears as a juggler of swords and lances, one who provokes the beginning of the battle by his flashy display and by killing the first of the English. Taillefer is also mentioned in Benoit's *Chronique des ducs de Normandie*, but in the context merely of valiant fighting.

equivalent of the papal ring and gonfanon William had obtained to support his claim and fire his troops' (p. 84).

Wace writes a hundred years after the battle, William of Malmesbury perhaps sixty years after. They invoke the song of the defeat at Roncesvalles, of Charlemagne and Roland and Oliver and the vassals who died there, as a cultural icon to be identified with the moment of foundation of Anglo-Norman culture. However, that the singing of a song of Roland is not attached to the persistent story of Taillefer until so much later than the battle suggests that it is a story told because it is apt rather than because it is factual.

Its aptness lies in the fact that it did what William needed to have done and in various ways sought to have done. It ascribed a moral authority – to the point of heroism – to the Norman invasion of England. The eleventh century was the time of the peace movement, an attempt by the Church to establish enough authority to keep Christians from killing Christians, in successive proclamations restricting the days and times and circumstances in which they could do so. The most sweeping of the proclamations of the Truce of God was from the Council of Narbonne in 1054, at which 'it was laid down that "no Christian should kill another Christian."' ⁶ In planning his invasion of England, William sought to persuade others and probably even himself that his invasion was sanctified. To do so he took a critical step, using his brother Odo as his agent: approaching the Holy See for recognition that his war was just. Pope Alexander II's approval was undoubtedly more readily forthcoming because of the protracted dispute about Archbishop Robert of Jumièges, who had been driven from the see of Canterbury in 1052, when his place was taken by the pluralist Stigand.⁷ Among the rapid succession of popes in the following decades, Stigand was recognized as Archbishop of Canterbury only by the deposed pope Benedict X, and was excommunicated by popes Leo IX, Victor II, Stephen IX and, after Benedict's deposition, Nicholas II and Alexander II. William thus had the opportunity to cast himself as on the side of the Church while denigrating Harold as an oath-breaker.⁸ The Duke thus rode into battle against fellow Christians under the pope's banner and with his blessing.

But the aptness of the singing of a song of Roland at Hastings also lies in its plausibility. Scholarly consensus now places the composition of the written antecedent of the Oxford *Roland* at the very end of the eleventh century, as a response to the events of the First Crusade and the cultural after-effects of the Council of

⁶ H. E. J. Cowdrey, 'The Peace and the Truce of God in the Eleventh Century', *Past and Present*, 46 (1970), 42–67 (p. 53). Earlier and less sweeping versions of the Truce of God among other prohibitions forbade bloodshed on Saturday; the Battle of Hastings took place on Saturday, 14 October.

⁷ F. M. Stenton, *Anglo-Saxon England*, 3rd edn (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1971), pp. 465–6, 568.

⁸ However, Stigand was not deposed immediately after the Conquest, and remained Archbishop of Canterbury until a papal legation of 1070 deprived him of office at the Council of Winchester. See H. R. Loyn, *The English Church, 940–1154* (Harlow: Longman, 2000), p. 69. For a thorough analysis of the claims about the legitimacy of William's kingship and the illegitimacy of Harold's, see George Garnett, *Conquered England: Kingship, Succession, and Tenure, 1066–1166* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), particularly ch. 1, 'The Justification of the Conquest', pp. 1–44.

Clermont of 1095. Yet we know from the purportedly historical *Nota Emilianense* (dated third quarter of the eleventh century) that fictions of Charlemagne and his war in Spain were then current in western Europe, even if we have no written versions extant.⁹ And those fictions, though not identical to the ones we know through the Oxford *Roland*, include the critical one that ‘at Roncevaux, Roland was killed by the Saracens’.¹⁰ A song of Roland at Roncesvalles could readily have been both symptom and agent in the social shift that led to Clermont, just as Clermont is a component in the social shift that led to the Oxford *Roland*. Urban II freely exploited a version of the past most fully expressed in the *chanson de geste* tradition when he urged at Clermont,

May the deeds of your ancestors move you and spur your souls to manly courage – the worth and greatness of Charlemagne, his son Louis and your other kings who destroyed the pagan kingdoms and brought them within the bounds of Christendom.¹¹

Poetry can be a provoker of social change for good or ill as well as a reflection of it.

It may seem fanciful to link the invader William, entering a Christian land and violently seizing it, with the Charlemagne depicted in the Oxford *Roland*, the champion of God whose army fights under the benediction pronounced by Archbishop Turpin to his fellow warriors, ‘Se vos murez, esterez seinz martirs’ (‘If you die, you will be blessed martyrs’, line 1134), and whose heroic nephew Roland pronounces the poem’s breath-taking assurance ‘Païen unt tort e chrestiens unt dreit’ (‘The pagans [sc. Saracens] are wrong and the Christians are right’, line 1015).¹² Evidently the backing of the pope did not exempt William’s men from the need to do penance for their violence, as laid out in papal legate Ermenfrid of Sitten’s Penitentials in 1070 for all those who fought under William, ‘as clear a sign as possible that the notion of appropriate penance after evil acts such as killing fellow Christians (even in a public war) was deeply embedded in the social consciousness of the age’.¹³ But an allusion within the Oxford poem makes that linkage:

Dist Blancandrins: ‘Merveilus hom est Charles,
Ki cuquist Puille e trestute Calabre,

⁹ The text of the passage from the *Nota Emilianense* is given by Pierre Le Gentil in *The ‘Chanson de Roland’*, trans. by Frances F. Beer (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1969), pp. 35–6. See Joseph J. Duggan, ‘1095 Pope Urban II at the Council of Clermont Proclaims the First Crusade: The Epic’, in *A New History of French Literature*, ed. by Denis Hollier (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1989), pp. 18–23, for a summary of the ‘[e]vidence for the existence of a thriving literature of epic song before the First Crusade [in] several precious texts’ (p. 19).

¹⁰ See Le Gentil, *The ‘Chanson de Roland’*, p. 36.

¹¹ From the eyewitness account by Robert of Reims, *Robert the Monk’s History of Jerusalem: Historia Iherosolimitana*, trans. by Carol Sweetenham (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2006), p. 81.

¹² *La Chanson de Roland*, ed. by Frederick Whitehead and rev. by T. D. Hemming (London: Bristol Classical Press, 1993). Further quotations will be from this edition and the translation from *The Song of Roland*, trans. by Glyn Burgess (London: Penguin, 1993).

¹³ Loyn, *The English Church*, pp. 149–50.

Vers Engleterre passat il la mer salse
Ad oes seint Perre en cunquist le cheuage'.
(lines 370–3)

[Blancandrin said: 'Charles is a marvellous man who conquered Apulia and all Calabria; he crossed the salty sea to England and won the poll-tax for Rome's own use'.]

The lines are historically nonsensical, since Charlemagne never conquered Apulia or Calabria, and never crossed the sea to England, which for him was the source of Christian scholarship in the person of Alcuin. Instead they are a compliment to contemporary Normans, Robert Guiscard and William of Normandy. The payment of Peter's Pence stands as a metonymy in these lines for the pragmatic alliance between William and the papacy, an alliance that suggests identification of the king's support of the pope with Charlemagne's mythologized sanctity.¹⁴

By analogy William was linked to Charlemagne.¹⁵ It was an analogy seen as far afield as Jerusalem after the First Crusade. Fulcher of Chartres's chronicle

¹⁴ Identification of an allusion to William goes back at least as far as Gaston Paris, in his *Extraits de la 'Chanson de Roland' et de la 'Vie de Saint Louis'* (Paris: Hachette, 1887), p. xxiii, while identification of an allusion to the Normans in Italy goes back at least as far as Émile Mireaux, *La Chanson de Roland' et l'histoire de France* (Paris: Michel, 1943), p. 179. Pierre Le Gentil includes both points in his listing of allusions that affect the clues to the poem's date, without accepting the overall arguments of either Paris or Mireaux: 'In listing both England and southern Italy among Charlemagne's most notable conquests, and in referring to Saint Peter's poll tax, the author of the *Roland* could well be thinking of William the Conqueror and Robert Guiscard' (Le Gentil, *The 'Chanson de Roland'*, p. 23). The conquest of Apulia and Calabria, and Robert Guiscard's decision to hold them from the Pope, were accomplished by 1059, the conquest of England of course by 1066. William's payment of the so-called Peter's Pence, a hearth-tax sent to Rome by English rulers since the ninth century (see Stenton, *Anglo-Saxon England*, p. 217, note 1) was, like his predecessors', sporadic, but he confirmed it as his obligation in 1080 at the same time as he declined to swear fealty to the Pope, as his Norman counterparts in Italy had done (see Loyn, *The English Church*, p. 98).

¹⁵ That this casting of William as a new Charlemagne was part of the unfolding invasion plan rather than a retroactive interpretation is suggested by the date of William's coronation, 25 December. Like Charlemagne's coronation as Emperor by the Pope, William's as King of England took place on Christ's own mass-day. It was not a particularly convenient date, being too long after 14 October to serve to deflect early resistance on the part of those who would be reluctant to rebel against a crowned and anointed king, and too late to forestall Edward Ætheling's election by the English nobles. Nor did the date allow *enough* time to construct a sumptuous spectacle that displayed the new king's power; that may have been left for a second coronation, at Westminster, in 1068 when Mathilde was crowned Queen. It also did not allow for papal involvement; that was left for yet another coronation, this time of William again by Pope Alexander's legates, in 1070. All that the date had to recommend it was the linkage to Charlemagne's coronation and its status as a holy day. English kings had tended to be crowned on holy days but, as it happens, not Christmas; and they had of late been crowned 'in the year after each of them had become king', not a scant two and a half months later. See George Garnett, *Conquered England*, p. 2, for the quotation and the gaps before the coronation dates of Edward the Elder (crowned at Pentecost), Æthelstan, Æthelred, and Edward the Confessor (crowned at Easter). Note also Guy of Amiens's flattering description of William: 'Promptior est Magno, largior et Carolo'. Barlow translates as 'readier than Pompey, and more bountiful than Charles' (*Carmen de Hastingae Proelio*, pp. 44–5), but Charles the Great is a more likely reference in this immediate context than Pompey the Great for 'Magno'.

describing the taking of Jerusalem makes a highly suggestive link between the conquest of Jerusalem, the conqueror of England, and the emperor Charlemagne:

It was the eleven hundredth year of our Lord, if you subtract one, when the people of Gaul took the city. It was the 15th day of July when the Franks in their might captured the city. It was the eleven hundredth year minus one after the birth of our Lord, the 15th day of July in the two hundred and eighty-fifth year after the death of Charles the Great and the twelfth year after the death of William I of England.¹⁶

This peculiar method of dating serves a primarily rhetorical purpose, to assert the heroic similarity of three 'Frankish' campaigns: of the Christian Europeans against the Saracens of Jerusalem, of the soon-to-be Holy Roman Emperor against the Saracens of Europe and of William the Conqueror against his Christian neighbours in England.

Fulcher's identification of 'the people of Gaul' of 1099 with the previous generation of Normans of 1066 and with Charlemagne's Franks is a fleeting matter. Between 1105 and his revisions completed around 1127 this identification disappears from his text. For Fulcher the identification no longer worked and required changing.

We might expect, then, that after the Anglo-Normans themselves stopped identifying with the Franks writers in England would lose interest in Charlemagne, and with that interest would evaporate any embracing of *chansons de geste*.¹⁷ And yet that interest does not seem to have gone away. The link between the invasion of England and the martial deeds of Charlemagne continued to be promoted throughout the twelfth century in the repetitions of the legend of the singing of Roland at Hastings. Charlemagne was invoked in a number of ways in the time of Henry II: by Walter Map noting the presence of oral stories of Charles and Pepin in the absence of adequate celebration of current heroic monarchs, by Henry himself, championing the canonization of Charlemagne, by Jordan Fantosme making the comparison between Henry and Charles explicit, though slightly to Charles's advantage, when he calls Henry

¹⁶ Fulk (or Fulcher) of Chartres, *Gesta Francorum Jerusalem Expugnantium* (*The Deeds of the Franks Who Attacked Jerusalem*), in *Parallel Source Problems in Medieval History*, ed. by Frederick Duncan and August C. Krey (New York: Harper, 1912), pp. 109–15 (p. 115).

¹⁷ It is a matter of continuing research precisely when such identifications shifted. Broadly speaking, according to R. H. C. Davis, *The Normans and their Myth* (London: Thames & Hudson, 1976), the Normans identified themselves indifferently as French or Norman during about the first forty years after the Conquest, and the mid-twelfth century was the period in which Anglo-Normans promoted the concept of *Normanitas*, distinguishing Normans from the French. Graham Loud, 'The "Gens Normannorum" – Myth or Reality?', *Anglo-Norman Studies*, 4 (1981), 104–16, 204–9, disagrees, demonstrating that the identification with being Norman rather than French was already strongly present during the eleventh century. Ian Short traces decade by decade shifts in the terminology that the Normans of England used in describing themselves: the identification as *Franci* in the 1090s is found up to 1140 in the term 'noz Franceis', but cultural identification with England and being English comes in the early decades of the twelfth century. See Ian Short, 'Tam Angli Quam Franci: Self-Definition in Anglo-Norman England', *Anglo-Norman Studies*, 18 (1995), 153–75 (pp. 173–4).

Le plus honorable	e le plus conquerant
Que fust en nule terre	puis le tens Moysant,
Fors sulement li reis Charle,	ki poeste fud grant
Par les dudze compaignuns,	Olivier e Rodlant.

[The most honorable and most virtuous king who ever was anywhere on earth since the time of Moses, save only Charlemagne, whose might was immense through the deeds of the twelve peers amongst whom were Oliver and Roland.]¹⁸

But not only Charlemagne was of interest in England. Of the earliest extant five *chansons de geste* that Sarah Kay mentions as having been composed before 1150, three are in Anglo-Norman manuscripts: the Oxford *Roland*, 'the (early part of the) *Chanson de Guillaume*', and *Gormont et Isembart*.¹⁹ The latter two deal with events supposedly in the reign of Charlemagne's son Louis. The first of these is more properly called the *Chançon de Willame*, since that is the Norman and insular form of the name used in the manuscript. In the fragment that makes up what is left of the second, the Saracen Gormont, King of Cirencester, fights against the Emperor Louis and is eventually killed by him. Both poems have English or Norman connections in language or setting, both are very early, and neither involves Charlemagne. They do have in common what would become the *chanson de geste* theme of Christians battling, and occasionally converting, non-Christians, and their presence in England shows an early interest in what was to be a very long lasting thematic component of insular romance.

It is the warfare in *chansons de geste* and its direction against a safe object, the Saracens, that I will argue made the poems of interest in England despite their setting in French history, and fed into the developing insular genre of romance. Not only did William need justification for his invasion, but poets also needed justification for the violence at the heart of Christian chivalry. It must be acknowledged that the *chansons de geste* are full of enmity of Christian against Christian – Roland against his stepfather Ganelon, William against his Emperor Louis – and this enmity is not always contained by being redirected against the Saracen foes. A group of some fifteen *chansons de geste* is sometimes known as the *Cycle des barons révoltés*; the violence in it takes its extreme form in *Raoul de Cambrai*, in which the eponymous hero loses his temper and orders the town of Origny burnt down, and within it a convent of nuns he has just promised to protect.²⁰ *Raoul de Cambrai* explores again and again how the qualities of a hero can be disastrous,

¹⁸ Jordan Fantosme's *Chronicle*, ed. and trans. by R. C. Johnston (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1981), *laisse* 10, lines 111–14. Laura Ashe describes the passage as 'the appropriation of French historical pride' (*Fiction and History in England, 1066–1200* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), p. 108). I owe the cluster of allusions to James Cain in his 'Charlemagne in the 1170s: Reading the Oxford *Roland* in the Context of the Becket Controversy', hosted on Robert Levine's website, Department of English, Boston University <<http://www.bu.edu/english/levine/cain.htm>> (I, para. 5, II, para. 1).

¹⁹ Sarah Kay, *The Chansons de geste in the Age of Romance: Political Fictions* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995), pp. 4–5, note 10.

²⁰ *Raoul de Cambrai*, ed. by Sarah Kay (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992), lines 1211–342.

as the violence escalates and former allies kill each other. Some *chansons de geste*, then, lay bare the horrors of chivalric violence. But killing Saracens, and occasionally converting one by demonstrating that God favours the Christian warrior, is a morally simplified way of establishing the unimpeachable heroism of a Christian knight, and is a common stratagem in *chansons de geste*.

It is a stratagem to be found in other insular romances. The paradox of Christian chivalry shows itself in poems like *Gui de Warewic* and its Middle English translation, in which Gui regrets killing so many men for the love of Felice and resolves to devote the remainder of his life to chivalry in the service of God. Many men are still to die at Gui's hands before he retires to his hermitage, but the Anglo-Norman poet resolves the moral problem in various ways. In the culminating example, Gui is required by King Athelstan to defend his kingdom against the Danes, who have a political claim on it. Heroic though Gui's defence of England is, he does not fight for merely political stakes. The moral problem is solved by having the Danes use a Saracen giant from Africa, Colebrant, as their champion to fight in single combat with Athelstan's champion, Gui. Gui defeats and kills Colebrant in one of the best remembered episodes in medieval insular literature, one in which Gui's superlative abilities as a warrior serve a national interest yet threaten no fellow Christians.²¹ The same sort of problem is illustrated late in the history of Middle English romances in Malory's *Morte Darthur*. Galahad, Bors and Percival have just slaughtered a 'grete multitude' and consequently 'they helde themself gret synners'. But this appalled recognition that their chivalric success is murder is immediately corrected. Galahad is reassured by a good man on the scene, 'Nay, repente you nat, [...] for they were nat crystynde'.²² It is not just 'The Quest of the Holy Grail' in which this problem of violence is addressed. 'Of King Arthur and the Emperor Lucius' makes the Roman army into a largely Saracen one²³ (in an obvious and unreconciled paradox, since Rome is simultaneously the seat of Christianity elsewhere in the text, and in defiance of historical chronology, since the Arthurian period supposedly antedates the coming of the Anglo-Saxons and therefore the

²¹ *Gui de Warewic: Roman du XIIIe siècle*, ed. by Alfred Ewert, CFMA 74-5, 2 vols (Paris: Champion, 1932-3), II, lines 7563-94; 10,780-11,304.

²² *The Works of Sir Thomas Malory*, ed. by Eugène Vinaver, 3 vols, rev. by P. J. C. Field, 3rd edn (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990), II, p. 997.

²³ The cultural significance of 'Rome' and its armies is somewhat muddled all the way back to Geoffrey of Monmouth, who makes no mention of Saracens, but whose Lucius summons 'oriental' kings including the king of Spain, a place that is conceptually, but not geographically, eastern for twelfth-century Britain. See *The 'Historia Regum Britannie' of Geoffrey of Monmouth*, vol. I: *Bern, Burgerbibliothek, MS. 568*, ed. by Neil Wright (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 1984), p. 161. My point is that at the end of the medieval period Malory is still employing the old insular trope of Saracen enemies, despite its historical awkwardness: 'And frome Nero unto Nazareth, and frome Garese to Galely, there come Sarysyns and becom sudgettis unto Rome [...] And so Lucius com unto Cullayne, and therby a castelle besegys, and wanne hit within a whyle, and feffed hit with Saresyns' (I, pp. 193-4). Malory's principal source for the passage, the *Morte Arthure*, had similarly made the Roman army largely Saracen: 'Sowdanes and Sarezenes owt of sere landes' (*Morte Arthure: A Critical Edition*, ed. by Mary Hamel (New York: Garland, 1984), line 607).

foundation of Islam), and Gawain fights a reprise of the classic Olivier-Fierabras duel against the non-Christian Priamus.²⁴

The frequency of Saracens and battles is only one reason to question the application to insular romances of tidy genre divisions that have been developed for French literary history. In France, the status of the *chanson de geste* as a separate genre is reinforced by form added to matter: the genre developed as formally homogeneous in France, with most members being in assonanced or later in rhyming *laisses* of irregular stanza length, but with decasyllabic or, later, alexandrine lines, while by contrast romances and other genres such as saints' lives were usually in rhymed octosyllabic lines. But of the *gestes* that exist only in Anglo-Norman manuscripts – the Oxford *Roland*, the *Chançon de Willame*, *Gormont et Isebart*, *Le Pèlerinage de Charlemagne* – no two have the same form. The *Roland* has decasyllabic lines in assonanced *laisses*, but also the puzzlingly intermittent AOI appearing after (and sometimes even during) some *laisses*. *Willame* has irregularly assonanced *laisses*, in lines of variable length and with a recurring refrain *Lunesdi al vespres* (or *jeudi al vespres*) that stands outside the assonance and occurs as the second last line of some but not most *laisses*.²⁵ The *Pèlerinage* has assonanced *laisses* in alexandrines. *Gormont et Isebart* is in assonanced *laisses*, but of octosyllables, and with a rhyming *aabb* refrain that occurs (with minor variation) after six of the poem's twenty-three extant *laisses*:

Quant il ot mort le bon vassal,
ariere enchalce le cheval;
puis mist avant sun estandart:
l'em la li baille un tuenart.²⁶

[When he had killed the good warrior, he drove back his horse; then he held forth his banner; someone there handed him a shield.]

The poems thus exhibit extraordinary formal variation – it would be fair to say, uncertainty – in comparison to the more formally homogeneous genre that was to develop on the continent. Their formal variation is the less surprising in that they are very early members of whatever written genre they are seen as belonging to: the Oxford *Roland*, the *Chançon de Willame*, and *Gormont et Isebart* are the earliest extant *chansons de geste*; *Le Pèlerinage* is slightly later. The variation in these early insular poems suggests a genre in creation, a genre not yet fixed.

In an insular context it makes most sense to see that newly developing genre as romance. In the case of some of the most central Anglo-Norman romances, what distinguishes them from *chansons de geste* is little more than that they are not set in France. Detailed stylistic analysis of the Anglo-Norman romance *Boeve de Haumtone* leads Marianne Ailes to identify it as a *chanson de geste*: 'what we find

²⁴ Malory, *Works*, I, pp. 228–34; *Morte Arthure*, lines 2513–713.

²⁵ *La Chanson de Guillaume* (*La Chançon de Willame*), ed. and trans. by Philip Bennett (London: Grant & Cutler, 2000).

²⁶ *Gormont et Isebart: fragment de chanson de geste du XIII^e siècle*, ed. by Alphonse Bayot, 3rd edn (Paris: Champion, 1931), lines 5–8.

in *Boeve de Haumtone* is an Anglo-Norman development of the genre – an appropriation of the *chanson de geste* for Insular culture'. Judith Weiss identifies three narrative hybrids of romance and *chanson de geste*, the *Romance of Horn*, the *Geste d'Alisaundre* or the *Roman de toute chevalerie* and *Boeve de Haumtone*. Laura Ashe argues that in *Horn* and Jordan Fantosme's *Chronicle* the twelfth century saw the 'creation of an insular genre of historical, or historicized, narrative, while French texts in contrast maintain the stricter genre differentiations visible in any comparison of Chrétien de Troyes with contemporary *chansons de geste*'. Sarah Kay goes less far, including *Boeve*, but not *Horn*, as a *chanson de geste*. William Calin opens the field still farther:

Two of the major ancestral romances, *Horn* and *Boeve de Haumtone*, were composed in 'épique' *laisses* [...] All contain a plethora of *chanson de geste* as well as *roman courtois* themes and motifs. *Gui de Warewic*, in its narrative structure, is a thirteenth-century *chanson de geste* in all but narrative form. [...] Texts such as *Haveloc*, *Horn*, and the stories of Fulk, Bevis, and Guy, even though they concentrate so much on the diegesis, do exalt the Anglo-Norman aristocracy in its military and chivalric essence, and exalt its legendary past. Perhaps they are the Anglo-Norman epic.²⁷

The solution to uncertainties about where to place these poems, some with formal traits of *chansons de geste*, some with structural traits, some with thematic traits, is not to argue about what constitutes the essential criterion of a *chanson de geste*, but to acknowledge the rich variety and capacity of insular romance.

In France the two genres developed side by side. Each claimed a different central interest. In England, however, one genre developed, a genre that came to be called either *geste* or *romance* indifferently. We will see below (p. 68) that Robert of Gretham uses the term *geste* for both *Mainet* and *Tristan* in the early thirteenth century. The term *romance* is used repeatedly for the *chansons de geste* in the Bordesley donation.²⁸ The Auchinleck manuscript (Edinburgh, NLS, Advocates' MS 19.2.1) allows a comparison of Middle English use of the two terms *romance* and *geste* in the early fourteenth century, roughly thirty years later than the Bordesley donation. Works that call themselves and/or their sources *gests* are *Amis and Amiloun* (with 11 instances), the stanzaic *Guy of Warwick* (7), *The King*

²⁷ Marianne Ailes, 'The Anglo-Norman *Boeve de Haumtone* as a *chanson de geste*', in *Sir Bevis of Hampton in Literary Tradition*, ed. by Jennifer Fellows and Ivana Djordjević (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2008), pp. 9–24 (p. 24); Judith Weiss, 'Insular Beginnings: Anglo-Norman Romance', in *A Companion to Romance from Classical to Contemporary*, ed. by Corinne Saunders (Oxford: Blackwell, 2004), pp. 26–44 (pp. 30–4); Ashe, *Fiction and History in England*, p. 123; Kay, *Chansons de geste*, p. 8, note 18; William Calin, *The French Tradition and the Literature of Medieval England* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1994), p. 87.

²⁸ Guy de Beauchamp, Earl of Warwick, gave his books to Bordesley Abbey in 1306. Among them were ten *chansons de geste* – *Doon de Nanteuil* (twice), *Doon de Mayence*, *Girart de Vienne* (twice), *Aimeri de Narbonne*, the *Chanson d'Aspremont*, *Gui de Nanteuil*, *Guillaume d'Orange*, *Fierabras* – and four Arthurian works: a *Brut*, a 'Josep ab Arimathie', a 'Volum de la Mort ly Roy Artur et de Mordret' and a 'Livres dou Launcelot'. See below, p. 69, and also, in this volume, Field, 'Patterns of Availability and Demand', p. 80, note 28.

of *Tars* (5), *Arthour and Merlin* (2), *King Richard* (2), *Horn Childe* (1); works that call themselves and/or their sources *romances* are *Arthour and Merlin* (8), *Bevis of Hampton* (2), *Richard* (2), the stanzaic *Guy* (1), perhaps *Otuel* ('[a]s we finden in romaunse write' could be a reference to language, but the phrasing is effectively the same as 'as we rede in gest'). Note that *Arthour and Merlin*, which uses the self-identifying trope frequently, uses both terms; the stanzaic *Guy* is seven times a *gest* to once a *romance*. *Richard*'s prologue uses both terms, *romaunse* and *gest*, apparently interchangeably. There is no reason to see the two terms in England as designating separate genres; instead they both are used to identify a group of texts, in both languages, that must be understood to be of the same kind as far as their medieval readers are concerned.²⁹

It was a genre with a huge range of potential forms, never settling on a single one: assonanced or rhyming *laissez*, various rhyming stanzas of fixed length, couplets; octosyllables, four-stress lines, iambic tetrameter, iambic pentameter, alliterative long line, alexandrines, prose. Form did not divide by matter on the fault lines established in France. Instead, some Anglo-Norman romances such as *Horn* and *Boeve de Haumtone* were written in the assonanced *laissez* proper to the continental *chansons de geste*, while others took other forms.

The capacious insular genre switched languages to Middle English part-way through its productive history, but in its medieval reception always continued to include French too: readers in England continued not only to import continental romances, but to read older romances, including *chansons de geste*, in French. From the beginnings in Anglo-Norman, what we call *chansons de geste* were key to the developing genre in England that came to be known as romance: they were the earliest members, among the central members, and therefore members that established expectations of what were the proper subjects of the genre. It was a genre with a range of potential subject matters, but its earliest and therefore its longest-lasting concern was with lethal chivalric violence, its glories, its moral problems, and its justifications.

Rosalind Field comments that '[t]he prolonged life of the *chansons de geste* in Anglo-Norman England is intriguing and indicates a taste for a slightly archaic, morally concerned and heroically active type of narrative poetry'.³⁰ Whether the taste for *chansons de geste* in England is seen as archaic and conservative because it lasts so late or on the other hand precocious because it starts so early, we are looking at two sides of the same coin. Both evaluations imply judgement by comparison, and the implicit standard of that comparison is always the literary climate in France. Tracing the development of the genre in England need not imply ignoring insular reception of continental romances and *chansons de geste*, but it does imply judging insular tastes and expectations as they were, not as they fell short of or exceeded French ones. But Field's observation that the life of *chansons de geste*

²⁹ The comparison can be done using the Lexicon and the Search function at the website Auchinleck Manuscript, ed. by David Burnley and Alison Wiggins, NLS 2003 <<http://www.nls.uk/auchinleck/>>.

³⁰ 'Romance in England, 1066–1400', in *The Cambridge History of Medieval English Literature*, ed. by David Wallace (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), pp. 152–76 (p. 154).

was long in Anglo-Norman England is a useful one, and indeed their reception went on long after England could still be called Anglo-Norman. Beate Schmolke-Hasselmann, in her book on *The Evolution of Arthurian Romance*, remarks that 'there is very little evidence that the patriotically political literature of the *chansons de geste* was particularly favoured within the territory of the Angevin rulers' after their loss of territories on the continent.³¹ But evidence there is. From first to last throughout the period of romances in medieval England, in French or in English, *chansons de geste* and their Middle English adaptations were strongly represented in insular libraries.

In the early thirteenth century, Robert of Gretham wrote to his patroness Dame Aline scolding her about her fondness for 'chançon de geste e d'estoire':

Veëz si ço pot estre vair
Que uns enfes oüst poair
Cum dist la chançon de Mainet,
U del orfanin Sansunnet,
U de la geste dan Tristam,
U del bon messenger Balam.

[Consider if this could be true: that a child could have strength, as the *chançon* says of Mainet, or about the wretched Sansunnet, or about the story of Sir Tristam, or about the good messenger Balam.]³²

This reproach preserves by chance information about one woman's reading. Another type of evidence that remains is manuscripts written in Anglo-Norman. Ruth Dean and Maureen Boulton's *Guide* shows that, by comparison, Arthurian romance is very sparsely represented.³³ But for thirteenth-century Charlemagne romances, listed under *Chansons de geste*, Dean has seven Anglo-Norman manuscripts of the *Chanson d'Aspremont*, one of *Otinell*, the only copy of *Le Pèlerinage de Charlemagne* and one of two manuscripts of the Anglo-Norman redaction of *La Destruction de Rome*. (The other is fourteenth-century.) In addition Dean lists two other *chansons de geste* from other cycles that we have already mentioned: *La Chançon de Willame* and *Gormont et Isembart* (both in their sole surviving manuscript).

The frequency of *chansons de geste*, and particularly those of the Charlemagne

³¹ Beate Schmolke-Hasselmann, *The Evolution of Arthurian Romance: The Verse Tradition from Chrétien to Froissart*, trans. by Margaret and Roger Middleton (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), p. 226.

³² Robert of Gretham, *Le Miroir: ou Les Evangiles des domnées*, ed. by Saverio Panunzio, Biblioteca di filologia romanza 26 (Bari: Adriatica, 1974), lines 5, 29–34. Robert's allusions are to the *enfances* of Charlemagne (in the *Chanson de Mainet*), the messenger Balan in the *Chanson d'Aspremont*, probably Sanson the son of Ganelon, perhaps in the *Chanson d'Aye d'Avignon*, as well as to Tristram. Note that the 'geste' of 'dan Tristam' is included on the same footing as three other 'chançon[s]'.

³³ Ruth Dean and Maureen B. M. Boulton, *Anglo-Norman Literature: A Guide to Texts and Manuscripts*, ANTS, OPS 3 (London: ANTS, 1999). There are two manuscripts of the Anglo-Norman *Fergus*, both Picard, an Anglo-Norman manuscript of Chrétien's *Perceval* and an Anglo-Norman fragment of *Perlesvaus* for the Arthurian romances.

cycle, in English libraries is evident in Keith Busby's *Codex and Context*. Referring to the thirty-odd early-thirteenth-century romance manuscripts still extant, he attributes the high incidence of *chansons de geste* and 'their popularity with the Norman conquerors of England' to the Norman connection with southern Italy, where *La Chanson d'Aspremont* is set, and to the early Norman invasion of France underlying *Gormont et Isembart*.³⁴ A more economical explanation, however, that fits all six of the *chansons* listed by Dean and not just two of them, is that they describe conflict between Us (where 'we' are understood to be the Christians of western Europe) and Them (the Saracens).

For the fourteenth century, Anglo-Norman manuscripts of *chansons de geste* are fewer. Dean lists only one of the prose *Pseudo-Turpin Chronicle*, one of the Anglo-Norman redaction of *La Destruction de Rome* and three of the Anglo-Norman redaction of *Fierabras*. But by the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, the circulation of French language romances in England is no longer identifiable by the language of the manuscripts. 'In the later period, continental romance texts are not preserved in Anglo-Norman copies. There are a number of reasons for this, the principal ones being the growing isolation of English Francophonia and the fact that those who wanted to read continental literature could probably still enjoy it in continental dialects'.³⁵ English booksellers imported large numbers of manuscripts from France. What English men and women had in their libraries is more readily identifiable from booklists and wills than from surviving manuscripts in Anglo-Norman dialect, though with enormous gaps in the evidence; what they actually read is identifiable by allusions and by the contents of English-language manuscripts. The most extensive listing of *chansons de geste* in an English library is Guy de Beauchamp's Bordesley donation in 1306, in which there were ten *chansons de geste*; by comparison, there were only four Arthurian works.³⁶ Isabella of France, queen to Edward II, owned *Aimeri de Narbonne* and 'de Duce de Basyns', but she owned three Arthurian works as well.³⁷ Still, an imbalance in favour of *chansons de geste* is visible in monastic libraries for which we have listings. They are far likelier than Arthurian romances to be found there throughout the period.

As the language of romances shifts to English, the great secular collections like the Auchinleck manuscript around the 1330s or Robert Thornton's two manuscripts in the 1440s show a persistent engagement with romances indebted to *chanson de geste*: Auchinleck, for example, has *Roland and Vernagu* and *Otuel a Knight*,

³⁴ Keith Busby, *Codex and Context: Reading Old French Narrative in Manuscript*, 2 vols (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2003), II, p. 495.

³⁵ Busby, *Codex and Context*, II, p. 499.

³⁶ See above, p. 66 and note 28. See also *The Libraries of the Cistercians, Gilbertines and Premonstratensians*, ed. by David Bell (London: BL in association with the British Academy, 1992), pp. 4–5.

³⁷ Carol M. Meale, '"... alle the bokes that I haue of latyn, englich, and frensch": Laywomen and their Books in Late Medieval England', in *Women and Literature in Britain, 1150–1500*, ed. by Carol M. Meale (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), pp. 128–58 (p. 139). Constance Hieatt has given a conjectural account of the lost *Chanson de Basin* based upon a Dutch analogue: 'Le Karel ende Elegast néerlandais et la Chanson de Basin', *Études germaniques*, 31 (1976), 369–91.

as well as a cluster of other romances that represent the conflict between Christian and Saracen so characteristic of *chansons de geste*: *King Richard*, *Bevis of Hampton*, *Guy of Warwick* (couplet and stanzaic romances, and *Reinbrun*), *The King of Tars*. By contrast, its sole Arthurian romance is *Arthour and Merlin*. A hundred years later, Thornton preserves for us the sole copies now extant of the alliterative *Morte Arthure* and of *Sir Perceval of Galles*, and he collects the *Awntyrs of Arthur*, but he also preserves the now extant copies of *Duke Roland and Sir Otuel of Spain* and of *The Sege of Melayne*, and he too, like the Auchinleck compiler, selects the romance of the crusading *King Richard*.

Among the well-read English of the late fourteenth and the fifteenth centuries, acquaintance with *chansons de geste* and their prose descendants is pervasive. Chaucer was familiar enough with the story of the *Chanson de Roland* to use casual allusions to Ganelon's treachery and Oliver's honour in the Monk's Tale (VII, 2387–90), to Ganelon's treachery in betraying Oliver and Roland in the *Book of the Duchess* (lines 1121–3), to Daun Russell the fox as a Ganelon in the Nun's Priest's Tale (VII, 3227), and to the vengeance taken on Ganelon in the Shipman's Tale (VII, 194).³⁸ Alice Chaucer's manuscript collection in 1466 included not her grandfather's works, and not Arthurian romance (for which her grandfather's admiration had been at best tempered), but *Renaud de Montauban (Les Quatre fils Aymon)*,³⁹ whether in its poetic form from the thirteenth century or the later prose version is unclear. It is a story to which Chaucer alludes in the stanza comparing Troilus, newly abashed by love, to proud Bayard pulling in harness with his fellow horses (*Troilus and Criseyde*, I, 218–24). Late in the fifteenth century, Caxton published *Charles the Grete*, a work in large part based on the *chanson de geste Fierabras*, although as he says in his preface to the *Morte Darthur* earlier in the same year, 'th'ystorye of Charlemayn, or Charles the grete [...] is had in many places, bothe in Frensshe and Englysshe'.⁴⁰

Chanson de geste themes such as invasion by Saracens, conversion of the heroic Saracen after conflict with a Christian champion, Saracen giants, the racial and monstrous otherness of many-coloured and strangely featured Saracens, the idol worship and worshippers' petulant rejection of Saracen idols who fail their worshippers, the exotic richness of Saracens and the wilfulness of the Saracen woman are pervasive in Anglo-Norman and Middle English romances. Some of these romances are fourteenth- and fifteenth-century translations of what counts as the separate genre of *chansons de geste* in French literary taxonomy, while others are equally central to the genre of romance in England but more linked to England by geography or history: *Guy of Warwick*, *Bevis of Hampton*, *King Horn*. Some are Arthurian: Malory's *Morte Darthur* picks up the Priamus episode from the alliterative *Morte* which in turn borrows heavily from the conflict between Olivier and Fierabras. The martial emphasis in Middle English romance shows

³⁸ All references to Chaucer's work are to *The Riverside Chaucer*, general editor Larry D. Benson (Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin, 1987).

³⁹ See Meale, 'Laywomen and their Books', p. 134.

⁴⁰ Caxton's Preface, in Malory, *Works*, I, p. xiii.

the development of the genre in England to accommodate *chanson de geste* at its core rather than to carve out territory distinct from it. In France the genre of *chansons de geste* is understood to contrast with or at least complement the romance; in England the genre of romance includes the *chanson de geste* at its root and in its pith. The opposition between Saracen and Christian recurrent in *chansons de geste* was the factor most appealing in England. It was an opposition that made chivalric violence thoroughly legitimate for medieval readers and it accords with the development of the genre of romance in England as one in which warfare is often of decidedly more interest than love. At least looked at from the insular side, neither the literary influence nor the propaganda value of *chansons de geste* is as straightforwardly divisible along nationalistic lines as later literary history would suggest.

One spectacular fifteenth-century manuscript can give us a last glimpse of a royal context in which Carolingian *chansons de geste* functioned in England. The richly illuminated London, BL, Royal MS 15.E.VI was presented to Margaret of Anjou by John Talbot, Earl of Shrewsbury at the time of her marriage to Henry VI in 1445. It is a manuscript designed for a particular woman, but not according to her current interests. Instead, it has a clear agenda of preparing Margaret for her role as queen of England. The manuscript is full of materials for the training of an English queen, not just information on the Order of the Garter and a genealogical table showing Henry's descent from English and French kings, but also considerable chivalric material of French origin. The new English queen's manuscript contains no Arthurian material, but four *chansons de geste* from the so-called *Cycle du roi*, a phrase used to label the various *chansons de geste* of heterogeneous origin that are set in the time of Charlemagne: *Simon de Pouille*, *Aspremont*, *Fierabras* and *Ogier*. It also contains a prose version of *Les Quatre fils Aymon*. But why should the Carolingian material be supposed to be useful to the instruction of an English queen in the making? What these works provide is identification with the chivalric aspirations of Christian Europe.⁴¹

The killing required by chivalry is at odds with Christianity, but in this manuscript, as in *chansons de geste* generally, killing Saracens is depicted as a service to Christianity and chivalric to boot. Even though in 1445 the fall of Constantinople to Ottoman Turks was only eight years away, at the time the manuscript was commissioned in Rouen and received by Margaret western Europe was in a relatively peaceful period of coexistence with eastern and southern Muslim nations; the fall of Constantinople was not apparent as a threat; there were no on-going crusades; European pilgrims made their way to the Holy Land, then held by Mameluke Turks, throughout the fifteenth century. The manuscript, with its collection of *chansons de geste*, speaks to a long-standing rather than immediate cultural concern: how to reconcile the militaristic ideals of chivalry with the pacifist ideals of Christianity. These *chansons de geste* place conflicts within the morally more

⁴¹ Another *chanson de geste* included in the Royal manuscript is that of *Le Chevalier au cygne*, the romanticized story of the ancestry of Godfrey of Bouillon, prominent leader of the First Crusade and first Christian ruler of Jerusalem.

comfortable opposition between Christian and Saracen. So do the French prose romances included in this manuscript, *Guy de Warwik*, *Le Roi Ponthus* and *Les Quatre fils Aymon*. Making the aspiration to kill on the battlefield laudable was a recurrent cultural need from the invasion of England to the Hundred Years' War and the Wars of the Roses.

The *chansons de geste* were exploited for this important ideological role in England; and as a consequence of their earliness and their popularity, they played an important generic role too. They had a significant influence on how the genre of romance was understood and how it developed in England from the Conquest onward, and that development was different from the history of the genres on the continent. Rather than being in generic opposition to romances, *chansons de geste* and their Middle English descendants *were* romances in England, as central to the romance tradition as romances belonging to the Matter of Britain or the so-called Matter of England, and very widely read. As one consequence, a key subject-matter of the *chansons de geste*, warfare against Saracens, became available to insular romance writers for use throughout the genre, in Arthurian romance (where it is historically impossible) as much as in romances such as *Gui de Warewic*, where it can be imagined as fitting into English history. The trope of the battle against the Saracen enemy is exploited from the earliest days of romance in England as a way of eliding the awkwardness of military aggression within a Christian ideology. As we have seen, that exploitation was both political, as in the analogy with Charlemagne used to justify William the Conqueror, and also literary, as an important characteristic of the genre enabling its representation of the ideals of chivalry.

Patterns of Availability and Demand in Middle English Translations *de romanz*

Rosalind Field

This chapter is concerned with the romance culture of Anglo-Norman England and its influence on Middle English romance culture through translation activity. It deals with the long fourteenth century, the period of changeover from French to English as the language of choice for narratives in England from the appearance of the early Middle English romances to the end of the century. Romance is a genre which is increasingly recognized as expressive of social and national identity and is therefore a focus of attitudes, both medieval and modern, to language change and choice. The romance culture of England, in the two vernaculars, provides ample evidence of the exploitation of available romance material by another generation and in another language. This is largely through a process of translation, understood as the medieval practice of enhancing, abbreviating or amplifying a text, but also one which incorporates selection, choice, rejection and reinterpretation of earlier material for a new audience.

The questions I want to examine in this paper arise from a survey of romance as translation.¹ This indicated that there was more to be done on the assessment of patterns of translation activity in general and that there is a need to reassess assumptions about the circumstances that produced the Middle English romances from identifiable French-language sources. Providing a survey of Middle English romance as translation shows how multi-faceted translation activity is and how it has been obscured by unexamined generalizations about relationships between materials in the two vernaculars. In focusing on translation, even in its loose medieval manifestation, we also become aware of the large number of fourteenth-century English romances which are not translations, a distinction which can be lost in discussions based on more formal or thematic classifications.

Any attempt to chart this requires interpretation of patchy evidence and is beset with expectations and assumptions. The earliest modern studies of the English romances adopt a stance that has proved long-lasting: 'There exists no English Romance, prior to the days of Chaucer, which is not a translation of some earlier French one.'² 'French' still occupies a place of otherness in the general discourse on Middle English romance. The French-language resources have until quite recently

¹ Rosalind Field, 'Romance', in *The Oxford History of Literary Translation in English*, vol. 1: *To 1550*, ed. by Roger Ellis (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), pp. 296–331.

² Walter Scott, in the Introduction to his edition of *Sir Tristrem: A Metrical Romance of the Thirteenth Century by Thomas of Erceuldoune, Called The Rhymer* (Edinburgh: Archibald Constable, 1804), p. 1.

been too often undifferentiated and not adequately contextualized. French is still seen as foreign, or sometimes more precisely as ultra-courteous, courtly and literary by contrast with the rougher merits of English. The processes which underlie translation from French to English are seen in terms of national expression, of class difference, of social aspiration, even where these factors can be seen to be quite anachronistic. This has gone on for far too long but the problem is deep-rooted and almost inescapable. We might do well to adopt the medieval terminology of *en romanz* to describe works written in the French language and thus work free of wider geographical and political implications.

So there is a need to reassess the translation activity by which romance material in French appears in Middle English – to distinguish where possible between insular and continental French and to see the activity of the translators against a background of bi- or trilingual culture. Much attention has been given to the romances originating in Anglo-Norman England and their successors in English, but less to the wider range of romances circulating in Anglo-Norman manuscripts in England, although these are just as much a part of the bilingual culture of authors, translators, scribes and audiences. The publication in 1999 of Ruth Dean's *Anglo-Norman Literature* has provided an important resource in supplying a complete overview of the record of extant Anglo-Norman manuscripts, their texts categorized by literary type, enabling romances to be considered as a group and related to contiguous genres such as chronicle and *chanson de geste*.³ This paper aims to make a start in using Dean's work to refine our understanding of the vernacular culture of the fourteenth century, with particular reference to romance, but with implications that may go beyond the genre.

To do this, I approach translation as a process that involves the interaction of three factors: availability, demand and competence. Availability of material in another language, often from another country or culture, will vary considerably according to cultural contacts, political events and channels of communication. It is, of course, a primary necessity; a translator can only work on material that s/he can access. Availability may create demand or vice versa; demand may be a function of patronage and fashion, of a particular audience or, in the case of more speculative production, an estimate of a wider potential audience. However, demand may be audience-led rather than speculative; awareness of what is available in another language and demand for certain material may lead to its being actively sought out. Translations, like original works, may create as well as respond to demand. In the context of medieval England, the career of Caxton is a prime example of this, with his conscious expression of a programme of response to, and stimulation of, demand for fashionable continental prose romance. In the absence of this kind of explicit evidence for the fourteenth century, we are left to chart the level of demand and nature of audience by the number and quality of extant manuscripts and the traces of interest in material in wills, quotations or references.

³ Ruth J. Dean with Maureen B. M. Boulton, *Anglo-Norman Literature: A Guide to Texts and Manuscripts*, ANTS, OPS 3 (London: ANTS, 1999).

What literary scholarship has always been adept at analysing and assessing is the third factor, competence. A translation or adaptation will display the ability, or lack of it, of its translator irrespective of its cultural position, and as this is what gives us the finished work of literary art it has always been the focus of attention. The corpus of scholarly editions of Middle English romance provides close analyses of sources and translation methods, and it is not the aim of this chapter to repeat this work. Linguistic competence is also reflected in a preference for copying over translation, which makes fewer demands of the copyist but requires an audience still competent in French.

The growing appreciation of the 'precocity' of Anglo-Norman literature,⁴ particularly, although not only, in the field of historiography and romance, has shifted the perceived balance between insular and continental writing quite dramatically in the last few years. The Angevin twelfth century in England is now recognized as one of the flowering points of French-language writing and crucial to the development of literary fiction in England.⁵ The romances from that period continued to be copied in England well into the fourteenth century, and there are traces of lost Anglo-Norman romances known in the Middle English period, so Anglo-Norman romance displays longevity as well as precocity.

But the Anglo-Norman period shows 'translation' activity which is also part of the context here – inasmuch as we accept a cultural translation between different French-speaking areas expressed now in terms of insularity.⁶ So, as we shall see, Dean's catalogue lists Anglo-Norman copies of known continental works as well as unique copies of works considered to have had lost continental originals. Selecting, copying, adapting and circulating a wide range of narrative material is as much a part of Anglo-Norman cultural activity as the production of original works.

Romances are usually classified according to subject matter or form. For our purposes we will attempt to group the Middle English romances according to their relationship, if any, to French-language predecessors and thus their position in terms of translation activity. For reasons that will become apparent, subject matter, as a common denominator rather than a basis for classification, will here take precedence over form.⁷

⁴ See M. Dominica Legge, 'La Précocité de la littérature anglo-normande', *Cahiers de Civilisation Médiévale*, 8 (1965), 327–49; Ian Short, 'Patrons and Polyglots: French Literature in Twelfth-Century England', *Anglo-Norman Studies*, 14 (1991), 229–49.

⁵ Helen Cooper, *The English Romance in Time: Transforming Motifs from Geoffrey of Monmouth to the Death of Shakespeare* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), pp. 22–33.

⁶ See K. V. Sinclair, 'Fierabras in Anglo-Norman: Some Cultural Perspectives', in *Anglo-Norman Anniversary Essays*, ed. by Ian Short, ANTS, OPS 2 (London, ANTS, 1993), pp. 361–78.

⁷ J. D. Burnley argues that for the medieval period 'an interest in form rather than content was [...] exceptional': 'Late Medieval English Translation: Types and Reflections', in *The Medieval Translator: The Theory and Practice of Translation in the Middle Ages*, ed. by Roger Ellis (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 1989), pp. 37–53 (p. 53).

Group 1:

Direct Middle English translation from versions of extant texts

This small group provides the clearest and most solidly established relationships between Anglo-Norman source texts and Middle English translations. All the romances in this group have long been recognized as translations of identifiable works. The relationships are direct enough to provide the grounds for close verbal analysis of the translator's art; in other words, competence has been fully considered. But there are also significant patterns of availability with implications for an understanding of audience and demand. In the case of the Middle English versions of *Guy of Warwick*, the five extant Middle English redactions are independent translations from different Anglo-Norman originals, the texts being closely enough related to enable detailed analysis.⁸ There are, to date, sixteen known manuscripts of the Anglo-Norman *Gui* dating from the mid-thirteenth to early fourteenth centuries and five manuscripts and fragments of the Middle English redactions.⁹ There are thus more manuscripts of the romance in circulation in the fourteenth century in Anglo-Norman than in Middle English, as is also the case with our next example.¹⁰ Of the three Middle English versions of Hue de Rotelande's *Ipomedon*, the late-fourteenth-century tail-rhyme *Ipomadon* is the only one that falls in the period under consideration. The four extant manuscripts of Hue's Anglo-Norman original date from the thirteenth century to the mid-fourteenth century.¹¹ None of these, however, is the exemplar of the Middle English versions.¹² Nevertheless, the Middle English translator has worked closely from a manuscript of Hue's poem and Purdie's detailed assessment establishes the competence of the translator. The two fifteenth-century versions are also directly taken from Hue.¹³

The Middle English *Amis and Amiloun* is preserved in four independent translations from a lost Anglo-Norman original closely related to the extant

⁸ See Ivana Djordjević, 'Guy of Warwick as a Translation', in *Guy of Warwick: Icon and Ancestor*, ed. by Alison Wiggins and Rosalind Field (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2007), pp. 27–43, and Alison Wiggins, 'The Manuscripts and Texts of the Middle English *Guy of Warwick*', in *Guy of Warwick: Icon and Ancestor*, ed. Wiggins and Field, pp. 61–80.

⁹ The fullest recent discussion of the Anglo-Norman manuscripts is Marianne Ailes, 'Gui de Warewic in its Manuscript Context', in *Guy of Warwick: Icon and Ancestor*, ed. Wiggins and Field, pp. 12–26. In some cases Ailes dates manuscripts later than Dean.

¹⁰ Wiggins sets the Auchinleck *Guy* firmly within its polyglot context ('Manuscripts and Texts', p. 68). See also Ralph Hanna, *London Literature, 1300–1380* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), ch. 3, 'Reading romance in London: The Auchinleck Manuscript and Laud misc. 622', pp. 104–47.

¹¹ Oxford, Bodleian Library, Rawlinson MS D913, dated thirteenth century; London, BL, Cotton MS Vespasian A.vii, early fourteenth century; BL, Egerton MS 2515, early fourteenth century; Dublin, Trinity College, MS 523, mid-fourteenth century: see Dean item 162.

¹² See *Ipomadon*, ed. by Rhiannon Purdie, EETS, OS 316 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), p. lxxxi. As Purdie points out (p. lix), the reference to *Ipomedon* in *King Richard* must be to the Anglo-Norman version, although that in the *Parliament of the Three Ages* may be to the Middle English.

¹³ *Ipomadon*, ed. Purdie, pp. xiii–xvi.

Anglo-Norman *Amis et Amilun*, of which there are three known manuscripts, the latest dating from the mid-fourteenth century and showing the influence of the Middle English version.¹⁴ The Middle English translation is dated to the late thirteenth century, giving another case of overlap and merging of vernacular traditions. Its earliest appearance is in the Auchinleck manuscript and it is also in the late-fourteenth-century Egerton MS 2862, with several other Auchinleck texts.¹⁵

Kyng Alisaunder is a translation of the Anglo-Norman *Roman de toute chevalerie* of Thomas of Kent, of which there are five manuscripts or fragments from the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries.¹⁶ The Middle English work is found in fragmentary form in Auchinleck and in two late-fourteenth-century manuscripts (Oxford, Bodleian Library, Laud Misc MS 622 and London, Lincoln's Inn, MS 150). This looks like another case of concurrent interest, and the translation situation is further complicated by the preference of most Middle English translators of classical material for supplementing the vernacular with Latin sources.¹⁷

The source texts of these works are all insular and available in copies produced, and presumably read and circulated, at the same time as their Middle English translations. It is significant that this is not a one-to-one relationship but that multiple Middle English copies are in fact multiple translations, often from a range of originals, so the actual level of activity is higher than may at first appear. In most cases the number of Anglo-Norman copies or versions around in the fourteenth century matches or exceeds that of Middle English ones. This indicates the concurrent existence of the two vernaculars rather than the serial replacement of French language versions by English, and may be more usefully considered as demonstrating a range of choices rather than decisive change.

Group 2:
*Translations that relate indirectly to extant
or recorded insular predecessors*

This group is larger than Group 1, but the boundary between them is not absolute. The romances of three English heroes, Havelok, Horn and Bevis (*Havelok the Dane*, *King Horn*, *Horn Childe*, *Bevis of Hampton*), belong here, as their relationship to their Anglo-Norman predecessors is indirect.

¹⁴ Cambridge, Corpus Christi College, MS 50, second half of the thirteenth century, with other insular texts including Wace's *Brut* and *Gui*; Karlsruhe, Badische Landesbibliothek, MS 345, second half of the fourteenth century; London, BL, Royal MS 12.C.xii (with *Fouke le Fitz Waryn*), first half of the fourteenth century: see Dean, item 157. Marianne Ailes says of the contents of the Cambridge manuscript: 'The owner or patron behind the compilation shows a taste for a good narrative with an element of piety and historicity' ('Manuscript Context', p. 23).

¹⁵ *King Richard*, *Beues of Hamtoun*, *Sir Degaré*, and *Floris and Blancheflur* occur in both Edinburgh, NLS, Advocates' MS 19.2.1 (Auchinleck MS) and London, BL, Egerton MS 2862. The other two manuscripts are fifteenth-century and c. 1500.

¹⁶ Cambridge, Trinity College, MS 0.9.34; Durham, Cathedral Library, MS C.IV.27B; London, BL, Additional MS 46701; Oxford, Bodleian Library, Lat. misc. MS B.17; Paris, BnF, fonds français MS 24364: see Dean, item 165.

¹⁷ Field, 'Romance', pp. 315–17.

The relationship between the various versions of the Horn story is complex and well studied, and does not need to be repeated here, other than to note that while the Anglo-Norman *Romance of Horn* is the earliest extant version, internal evidence argues for a previous English-language one, providing an example of the long-established two-way processes of translation between the two vernaculars. The pattern of manuscript evidence is one of overlap rather than concurrence: there are five extant thirteenth-century fragments of the twelfth-century Anglo-Norman *Romance of Horn*,¹⁸ while the Middle English *King Horn* dates from the thirteenth century and survives in one thirteenth-century manuscript and two from the early fourteenth century.¹⁹ *Horn Childe*, a version closer to the *Romance of Horn*, is found only in the Auchinleck manuscript.

Treatments of the story of Havelok are even more complex, occurring as they do in chronicle as well as romance. Again the Anglo-Norman copies of romance versions and copies and revisions of Gaimar's chronicle overlap with the period of the production of the Middle English *Havelok the Dane*. Gaimar's *Estoire des Engleis*, written in the 1130s, is extant in four manuscripts from the late twelfth to the early fourteenth centuries.²⁰ The Anglo-Norman *Lai d'Haveloc* is dated to c. 1200 and thus has habitually been perceived as intermediate between Gaimar's earlier chronicle episode and the late-thirteenth-century Middle English romance. However, the two extant manuscripts of the *Lai* date from the late thirteenth century to the early fourteenth, that is, like the two later copies of Gaimar, a period concurrent with the production of the Middle English romance.²¹ This suggests that the Havelok story was in demand as a result of chronicle treatments, giving rise to two concurrent responses, each typical of the time – the recreation of the material as the expanded and radical Middle English *Havelok the Dane* and at the same time the copying of the traditional treatment in the *Lai*. Rather than seeing these as aimed at different audiences it may be preferable to treat them as two different generic responses to material which already has a dual generic identity.

The relationships between the different versions of *Boeve/Bevis* present a complex picture of responses to demand and evidence of availability. The Anglo-Norman *Boeve*, dating originally from the late twelfth century, spreads during the thirteenth century with the lost Didot manuscript and the newly discovered Lambeth Palace fragment of the second half of the thirteenth century, and Paris, BnF, nouv. acq. fr. MS 4532, dating from the turn of the thirteenth century (and three continental versions).²² This leads up to, and partly overlaps with, the career of the Middle English *Bevis*, dating from the turn of the thirteenth century

¹⁸ Dean, item 151; *The Romance of Horn by Thomas*, 2 vols, ed. by Mildred Pope, ANTS 9–10 (Oxford: ANTS, 1955–64), I, pp. ix–xii.

¹⁹ Oxford, Bodleian Library, Laud misc. MS 108 (late thirteenth century); CUL, MS Gg.4.27.2 (c. 1300); London, BL, Harley MS 2253 (1330s).

²⁰ Dean, item 1. Gaimar's chronicle opens with the story of Havelok.

²¹ Cologny-Geneva, Bibliotheca Bodmeriana, MS 82, of the turn of the thirteenth century, and London, College of Arms, Arundel MS 14, of the early fourteenth century (with Wace, Gaimar, Langtoft and other historical material): see Dean, item 152.

²² Dean, item 153.

and extant in the Auchinleck manuscript, two other manuscripts from the fourteenth century (Cambridge, Gonville and Caius College, MS 175 and London, BL, Egerton MS 2862) and five of the fifteenth century into the sixteenth.²³ There is some overlap here but unlike *Guy*, with which it is so closely associated but whose aristocratic patronage it lacks, the Middle English versions seem to have displaced the Anglo-Norman early in the fourteenth century.

The close interrelationship between the Middle English romances of English heroes and Anglo-Norman versions is only to be expected, given the Anglo-Norman production of these tales, although as we have seen the situation is one of overlapping interest in both vernaculars rather than a straight chronological replacement. However, the fortunes of the Matter of France material in England, as they emerge from Dean, offer a clearer picture, if one less expected and less recognized.²⁴ Subject matter is the defining feature here rather than genre, as the move from French language to English is also one from *chanson de geste* to romance, and the Anglo-Norman evidence for insular interest in and production of Matter of France material provides an informative context for activity in Middle English. The longevity of the *chanson* in Anglo-Norman England is evident in the presence of numerous copies, although with the passage of time the range of texts narrows considerably.²⁵ There are extant Anglo-Norman versions of nine *chansons de geste*, ranging from the Oxford *Chanson de Roland* of the twelfth century to three fourteenth-century copies of the *Fierabras*.²⁶ With the exception of the twelfth-century fragment of *Gormont and Isembart* and the unique copy of *La Chançon de Guillaume*, all belong to the Charlemagne cycle, and most relate to Pseudo-Turpin and the *Fierabras*-Otinell material. While the early Anglo-Norman manuscripts thus play a significant role in the survival of some of the most important Matter of France material, there is little sign of insular copying of the other cycles of the Matter of France, the Rebellious Vassal cycle or the wider Guillaume cycle. The later Anglo-Norman scene is, in effect, cultural translation; Anglo-Norman

²³ See Jennifer Fellows, 'The Middle English and Renaissance *Bevis*: A Textual Survey', in *Sir Bevis of Hampton in Literary Tradition*, ed. by Jennifer Fellows and Ivana Djordjević (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2008), pp. 80–113.

²⁴ Janet M. Cowen, 'The English Charlemagne Romances', in *Roland and Charlemagne in Europe: Essays on the Reception and Transformation of a Legend*, ed. by Karen Pratt (London: King's College, Centre for Late Antique and Medieval Studies, 1996), pp. 151–68; Marianne Ailes, 'Comprehension Problems and Their Resolution in the Middle English Verse Translations of *Fierabras*', *Forum for Modern Language Studies*, 35 (1999), 396–407, and 'The Date of the *Chanson de Geste Fierabras*', *Olifant*, 19 (1998), 247–71. I am indebted to Marianne Ailes for guidance through recent developments in *chanson de geste* scholarship. Cf. also Melissa Furrow's chapter in this volume.

²⁵ Another sign that early Anglo-Norman audiences were receptive to the *chansons* is the use of *chanson de geste* style and versification for several of the romances of English heroes and associated texts; see Rosalind Field, 'The Anglo-Norman Background to Alliterative Romance', in *Middle English Alliterative Poetry and its Literary Background*, ed. by David Lawton (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 1982), pp. 54–69 (60–1).

²⁶ Dean, items 76–82. For the insular *Fierabras* manuscripts, see also Sinclair, 'Fierabras in Anglo-Norman'. There is also a *Fierabras* in the mid-fifteenth-century Talbot-Shrewsbury MS, London, BL, Royal MS 15.E.vi.

versions are 'products of the bilingual culture of England in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries', the French ancestry of such texts being 'so faded as not to be important culturally'.²⁷

The famous inventory of Guy de Beauchamp casts further light on the Matter of France in England before the early fourteenth century – his list of manuscripts includes several recognizable *chansons de geste*: 'Un Volum, qe parle des quatre principals Gestes de Charles, e de dooun, e de Meyace, e de Girard de Vienne, e de Emery de Nerbonne. Un volum del Romaunce Emōnd [...] e deu Roy Charles dooun de Nauntoile. E le Romaunce de Gwyon de Nuntoyl'.²⁸

If this list is a guide, at least to the reading tastes of the higher aristocracy, it indicates that the *chansons* were collected in some quantity (whether in insular manuscripts or not, we cannot know) but carefully disposed of – perhaps as old-fashioned – by the early fourteenth century. Certainly Dean's catalogue shows that the majority of surviving *chanson* manuscripts comes from the thirteenth century. It is also a stark reminder of the quantity of lost material.

Turning to translations, there are nine Middle English verse romances drawing on Matter of France material, dating from the early fourteenth to the mid-fifteenth century. Two Matter of France works occur in the Auchinleck manuscript of c. 1330: *Roland and Vernagu* and *Otuel a Knight*. Two romances in the Fillingham manuscript (London, BL, Additional MS 37492) date from 1357–1400: *Firumbras* and *Otuel and Roland*. There is a late-fourteenth-century northern version of the Otinel material, *Duke Roland and Sir Otuel*, and from around the same date the Ashmole manuscript (Oxford, Bodleian Library, Ashmole MS 33) version of *Sir Ferumbras*. A short *Song of Roland* dates from c. 1400. *The Sowdan of Babylon* dates from the first half of the fifteenth century, as does *The Sege of Melayne*.²⁹

²⁷ Sinclair, 'Fierabras in Anglo-Norman', p. 377. See also Marianne Ailes, 'La Réception de Fierabras en Angleterre', in *Le Rayonnement de Fierabras dans la littérature européenne*, ed. by M. le Person, CEDIC 21 (Lyon: CEDIC, 2002), pp. 177–89.

²⁸ Madeleine Blaess interprets this as: *Doon de Nanteuil* (perhaps two copies), *Doon de Mayence*, *Girard de Vienne* (two copies), *Aimeri de Narbonne*, *Guy de Nanteuil*, *Fierabras*, *Chanson d'Aspremont* and one or two copies of *Prise d'Orange*. The 'Romaunce de Willame de Orenge, e de Tebaud de Arable' could be any Guillaume d'Orange *chanson*. See Madeleine Blaess, 'L'Abbaye de Bordesley et les livres de Guy de Beauchamp', *Romania*, 78 (1957), 511–18 (pp. 513, 516–17).

²⁹ There is a complex network of interrelationships between these romances. The Auchinleck romances would originally have been preceded by a general prologue setting out the context of Charlemagne romances, which now survives in the Fillingham *Otuel and Roland*. These romances are considered to be derived from a lost Middle English romance of 'Charlemagne and Roland' drawing on the *Estoire de Charlemagne* and from the Pseudo-Turpin material in Latin: see Cowen, 'English Charlemagne Romances', p. 155. *Duke Roland and Sir Otuel* derives from the same material. The Fillingham *Firumbras* shares a source with the Egerton manuscript of the Anglo-Norman *Fierabras* (London, BL, Egerton MS 3028), as do the Ashmole *Sir Ferumbras* and the *Sowdan of Babylon*: see Ailes, 'Comprehension'. The *Song of Roland* draws on various versions of the Old French *chanson* and the Latin *Pseudo-Turpin*, and the latter provides material for the *Sege of Melayne*: see Stephen Shepherd, "'This grete journee': *The Sege of Melayne*", in *Romance in Medieval England*, ed. by Maldwyn Mills, Jennifer Fellows and Carol M. Meale (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 1991), pp. 113–32 (p. 121).

These scraps of a major narrative tradition present a confusing picture of Middle English translation activity. However, if placed in a wider context the situation becomes clearer. There is no Matter of France material in Middle English that does not have its extant equivalent in Anglo-Norman. There is overlapping in the period of production, and while the Middle English corpus may be aiming at different audiences, it shows no independent or new approach to selection of material. The Middle English Matter of France romances can be seen as translations derived from the already established selection of *chanson* material available as insular texts in Anglo-Norman from the twelfth century into the mid-fourteenth century. The Anglo-Norman selection, as it survives, is mostly *chanson du roi* material and strongly influenced by the pietistic, crusading strain that derives from the Pseudo-Turpin tradition.³⁰ This precedent may account for the otherwise odd concentration on Otuel and Fierabras material amongst the Middle English works. It is precisely these areas that are translated into Middle English: the *Song of Roland* (and the lost 'Charlemagne and Roland'), Otinel and Fierabras traditions and the Pseudo-Turpin-derived *Sege of Melayne*.

Availability would seem to be the key here, and the selection of material has already been made by the Anglo-Norman copyists over two centuries. So if we see the interest in Charlemagne romances in the Middle English period as governed by interest in crusading, relics and a feeling for Christendom,³¹ we probably need to consider that this aspect of the material governed the choices of those making the cultural, not linguistic, translation from continental to insular texts in the Anglo-Norman period.

It may well be that too much is lost ever to build up a picture of the interrelationships between the various Anglo-Norman and Middle English Matter of France texts.³² Nevertheless, the dependence, however displaced, of the surviving Middle English texts on the selectivity and availability of the previous Anglo-Norman insular tradition now looks clearer, thanks to recent work on the Anglo-Norman material. This demonstrates the longevity of Anglo-Norman, with the presence of these extant copies of Matter of France material available in Anglo-Norman in fourteenth-century England suggesting the consistent insular tastes of audiences in the two vernaculars.

It is worth spending some time on the Matter of France material because it is a distinct category with textual relationships that offer a clear model against which

³⁰ For the two versions of the prose translation of the *Pseudo-Turpin*, one imported, one insular, see *The Anglo-Norman Pseudo-Turpin Chronicle of William de Briane*, ed. by Ian Short, ANTS 25 (Oxford: ANTS, 1973).

³¹ See Cowen, 'English Charlemagne Romances'; Philippa Hardman, 'The *Sege of Melayne*: A Fifteenth-Century Reading', in *Tradition and Transformation in Medieval Romance*, ed. by Rosalind Field (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 1999), pp. 71–86; Robert Warm, 'Identity, Narrative and Participation: Defining a Context for the Middle English Charlemagne Romances', in *Tradition and Transformation*, ed. Field, pp. 87–100.

³² The catalogue of St Augustine's, Canterbury lists a 'Gesta Guydonis de Burgundia in patria lingua', which, as Wilson suggests, indicates English: R. M. Wilson, *The Lost Literature of Medieval England* (London: Methuen, 1952, rev. edn 1970), pp. 110–11.

to test the situation with regard to the apparently scattered group of non-cyclical romances.

The early Middle English *Floris and Blancheflur* is one romance always considered as a translation of a continental original but for which an insular copy of that original may have provided the available source.³³ Attempts to explain the appearance of *Floris*, a delicately humorous story of young love in the Saracen world, amidst the heroic and insular material of other early Middle English romances, should take into account the presence of the Anglo-Norman copy in Vatican City, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, Palat. Lat. MS 1971, an early-thirteenth-century manuscript that contains Wace's *Brut*.³⁴ I would suggest that we operate a version of Ockham's razor in such a case – that the simplest explanation for the existence of a Middle English translation is the availability of an Anglo-Norman original or, as in this case, a copy. Only where such a geographically and culturally close opportunity is absent should we assume the more complex pattern of translation from a continental exemplar.

This principle can be applied to other non-cyclical romances. In the case of *Octovian*, the continental source survives only in an Anglo-Norman manuscript,³⁵ and it is this that gives rise to two Middle English versions through an intermediate mid-fourteenth-century northern archetype. Widespread references suggest the continuous popularity of the material in one or both vernaculars: Chaucer's reference in *The Book of the Duchess*, for example, can owe nothing to the two surviving Middle English versions, which are extant in three fifteenth-century manuscripts, the earliest being Lincoln Cathedral, MS 91 (Northern Thornton). The Anglo-Norman copy of the Old French source describes itself as a translation 'de latin en romanz' and there is evidence of another Anglo-Norman copy in Dover in the fourteenth century.³⁶

The Middle English versions of Marie de France's *Lanval*, *Sir Landevale* and Thomas Chestre's *Sir Launfal*, are indicative of a fourteenth-century familiarity

³³ *Floris and Blancheflur*, ed. by F. C. de Vries (Groningen: Drukkerij V. R. B., 1966). There are two thirteenth-century manuscripts of the c. 1250 Middle English original, Cambridge, University Library, MS Gg.4.27.2, and London, BL, Cotton MS Vitellius D.3, and from the early fourteenth century Auchinleck and London, BL, Egerton MS 2862. De Vries mentions the Vatican Library manuscript (Vatican City, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, Palat. Lat. MS 1971, or 'V' in de Vries's edition) but he does not identify it as insular and confines his comparative discussion to complete versions of the poem (pp. 53–60). Patricia Grieve, *Floire and Blancheflor and the European Romance* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), pp. 15–19, notes the importance of manuscript V to the textual study of the Old French *Floris*, but does not identify it as insular.

³⁴ Dean, item 164, suggests the mid-twelfth-century continental composition may have had an Anglo-Norman original. One of the four extant continental manuscripts, Paris, BnF, fonds français MS 19152, she considers to be 'probably' continental but points out it contains other works of Anglo-Norman origin, *Partonopeus de Blois* (also in V) and *Le Chastoiement* (item 263, wrongly cross-referenced to 262).

³⁵ Dean, item 174; Oxford, Bodleian Library, Hatton MS 100, dated to the early fourteenth century by Frances McSparran, *Octovian*, EETS, OS 289 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986), p. 38. The romance is known as *Octovian*, as here, or *Octavian*, as in note 36 below.

³⁶ K. V. Sinclair, 'Evidence for a Lost Anglo-Norman Copy of *Octavian*', *Neuphilologische Mitteilungen*, 79 (1978), 216–18.

with some version of Marie's work (as is the unique copy in Auchinleck of *Lai le Freine*), as well as showing some freedoms in bringing in additional material, notably from the continental *Graelent*. Marie's complete *Lais* survive in only one insular mid-thirteenth-century manuscript, London, BL, Harley MS 978, but *Lanval* also survives on its own in another Anglo-Norman manuscript, the late-thirteenth-century London, BL, Cotton MS Vespasian B.xiv,³⁷ which may suggest that it was the one *lai* that became detached to lead an independent existence as it does in Middle English, perhaps because of its Arthurian setting.³⁸ Another independent Arthurian work, the Middle English *Sir Tristrem*, unique to Auchinleck, is a reworking, albeit woefully inadequate (and for that reason discussed here rather than in group 1), of the Anglo-Norman *Tristan* of Thomas of Britain, which is extant in ten thirteenth-century fragments and was still available to be quoted by the early-fourteenth-century *Blasme des Fames* (Dean, item 158).

One romance not noted by Dean is *Le Bone Florence of Rome*, translated from an Old French original, but with an Anglo-Norman copy of that available in Cologny-Geneva, Biblioteca Bodmeriana, MS 67 (the Marske Hall manuscript).³⁹ Our application of Ockham's razor would indicate that the simplest explanation for its presence in Middle English is in response to demand for a text already familiar to insular audiences and available to a translator. *Richard Cœur de Lion*, also known as *King Richard*, survives in seven independent manuscript versions, none evidently the source for any of the others, the fragment in Auchinleck being the earliest and the closest to an assumed English version of an Anglo-Norman original.⁴⁰ There is no sign of this original, but there is an Anglo-Norman *Crusade and Death of Richard I* dating from 1240–1320 and extant in two fourteenth-century manuscripts, which argues for the continuous interest in the figure of the crusading king in both vernaculars in the form of popular chronicle or the closely parallel historical romance.⁴¹ The Middle English *Richard* shows the persuasive influence of the *chansons de geste*, while its manuscript context is with historical and heroic texts, including, in Cambridge, Gonville and Caius College, MS 175, three Charlemagne romances. As with other fourteenth-century examples, this is

³⁷ *Lanval* also appears in two of the three continental manuscripts containing some of Marie's *Lais*: Paris, BnF, nouv. acq. fr. MS 1104 and BnF, fonds français MS 2168. See *Les Lais de Marie de France*, ed. by Jean Rychner (Paris: Champion, 1983), pp. xix–xx.

³⁸ There are several apparently Arthurian *lais*, including *Lanval*, listed in the mid-thirteenth-century Shrewsbury School MS 7: see Elizabeth Archibald, 'The Breton Lay in Middle English: Genre, Transmission and the Franklin's Tale', in *Medieval Insular Romance: Translation and Innovation*, ed. by Judith Weiss, Jennifer Fellows and Morgan Dickson (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2000), pp. 55–70.

³⁹ The Marske Hall manuscript, of the second half of the thirteenth century, is listed by Dean under its other contents: Wace's *Brut*, the *Prophecies of Merlin*, the *Livre de reis de Brittanie*, and *Gui de Warewic*. See also Marianne Ailes, 'Manuscript Context', pp. 20–1.

⁴⁰ *Richard Löwenherz*, ed. by K. Brunner (Vienna: Wilhelm Braunmüller, 1913).

⁴¹ Oxford, Bodleian Library, Fairfax MS 10 and Cambridge, Trinity College, MS O.4.32, both with Trevet's *Chronique*: see Dean item 56 and *The Crusade and Death of Richard I*, ed. by R. C. Johnston, ANTS 17 (Oxford: ANTS, 1961). Johnston explains that he retitled the work because 'this text is more interesting as a story concentrating on the person of Richard than as a contribution to detailed knowledge of the Crusade' (p. vii).

evidence of the concurrent pattern where both texts are extant or, as here, texts handling the same material overlap or are copied concurrently.

This group shows that expanding the range of enquiry from direct sources to other versions of the same material – as has always been done for the material on Horn and Havelok – confirms that the Middle English romance translations are embedded in a context of earlier treatments and also, more often than not, exist alongside concurrent versions in Anglo-Norman. The presence of Anglo-Norman copies of independent romances, often fortuitously in the company of central texts such as Wace's *Brut*, offers a direct line of communication with Middle English translations.⁴² The vernacular narratives of fourteenth-century England move easily from one language to another and seem to set up overlapping demand for selected areas of subject matter in both languages.

Group 3:

*Translation or adaptation from an identifiable continental source
of which there is no trace of an insular version*

We finally come to a group which provides the characteristics we have been led to expect by generations of commentators on Middle English romance development: those that are translated from an identifiable continental source. For our purposes it is the lack of an insular version of that source which distinguishes them from those in groups 1 and 2.

This group is dominated by the Matter of Britain: *Ywain and Gawain*,⁴³ *Of Arthour and of Merlin*, *Sir Percyvall*, *Joseph of Arimathie*, the Stanzaic *Morte*, *Lybeaus Desconus*, and in the fifteenth century the works of Lovelich, the Gawain romances, and *Lancelot of the Laik*. This is something of a random selection of discrete Arthurian texts; apart from the Stanzaic *Morte* there is little attempt to provide significant coverage of the Arthurian legend.⁴⁴ Their status draws our attention to the absence of Arthurian material in the Anglo-Norman romance corpus;⁴⁵ *Brut* chronicle material is of course present in abundance.⁴⁶ Arthurian

⁴² *Partonopeus de Blois*, the source text of the fifteenth-century Middle English *Partonope of Blois*, survives in an Anglo-Norman fragment of the thirteenth century, New Haven, Yale University, Beinecke Library MS 395, with other texts including Wace's *Brut*, as also in V and in BnF, fonds français MS 19152, with *Floire et Blancheflor* (Dean, item 173; see note 34 above).

⁴³ This is the most discussed of the Middle English translations, as the only one taken from Chrétien: see Keith Busby, 'Chrétien de Troyes English'd', *Neophilologus*, 71 (1987), 596–613, and David Matthews, 'Translation and Ideology: The Case of *Ywain and Gawain*', *Neophilologus*, 76 (1992), 452–63.

⁴⁴ Guy de Beauchamp's list shows a similar scattering of Arthurian romance: *Roman de Joseph d'Arimathie*, the first livre of *Lancelot*, *La Mort le Roi Artu* and a chronicle *Romaunce deu Brut*, *e del Roy Costentin*: Blaess, 'L'Abbaye de Bordesley', pp. 517, 513.

⁴⁵ See Field, 'Anglo-Norman Background', pp. 64–5, and Alison Stones, 'Aspects of Arthur's Death in Medieval Illumination', in *The Passing of Arthur: New Essays in Arthurian Tradition*, ed. by Christopher Baswell and William Sharpe (New York: Garland, 1988), pp. 52–86.

⁴⁶ See Dean, items 2, 3, 13–22, 36, 42–6, 48–52.

romance follows its own idiosyncratic path, complicated by the chronicle tradition and the political implications of the material.⁴⁷

However, there is evidence from the fourteenth century of Anglo-Norman copying of continental Arthurian material: an episode from the Prose *Lancelot* copied into two manuscripts of Langtoft's Chronicle, both of the second half of the fourteenth century (Dean, item 168); the only extant Anglo-Norman copy of a Chrétien romance, *Perceval*, in London, College of Arms, Arundel MS 14, of the first quarter of the fourteenth century, together with texts including Gaimar, Wace's *Brut*, Langtoft, and the *Lai d'Haveloc* (Dean, item 169); and *Perlesvaus*, in an early-fourteenth-century fragment, associated by Carley with Glastonbury abbey (Dean, items 170–2).⁴⁸

This is a very limited production of insular copies of Arthurian romance for francophone audiences.⁴⁹ However, it does suggest that by the fourteenth century there was some demand for Arthurian romances that could be associated with insular history or places, as were the earliest of the English-language Arthurian romances.⁵⁰ There is of course substantial evidence of manuscripts of continental romances circulating amongst the élite during the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries.⁵¹ But this availability of the prose romances is not widely exploited by translators into English before Malory.

Beyond the Matter of Britain romances, there are only the romances of *William of Palerne* and *Chevalere Assigne*, translations from the twelfth-century Old French *Guillaume de Palerne* and *Naissance du Chevalier au Cygne* respectively.⁵² Both are interesting departures from the norms of alliterative romance, usually seen as heroic, local and often deliberately archaizing, and their backgrounds indicate aristocratic interest in importing continental material which stands out the more strongly when we realize how rare it is. The Swan Knight material had its own significance as an ancestral legend in England.⁵³ The story of William of Palerne seems to have no explanation other than its inherent entertainment value, but we

⁴⁷ See Edward Donald Kennedy, 'Sir Thomas Malory's (French) Romance and (English) Chronicle', in *Arthurian Studies in Honour of P. J. C. Field*, ed. by Bonnie Wheeler (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2004), pp. 223–34.

⁴⁸ James P. Carley, 'A Fragment of *Perlesvaus* at Wells Cathedral Library', *Zeitschrift für romanische Philologie*, 108 (1992), 35–61.

⁴⁹ Paris, BnF, fonds français MS 1450, a collection containing Chrétien's romances inserted at the point in Wace's chronicle where he mentions 'aventures', was apparently made for an English patron: see Terry Nixon in *Les Manuscrits de Chrétien de Troyes / The Manuscripts of Chrétien de Troyes*, ed. by Keith Busby et al., 2 vols (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1993), I, p. 31, and Stones, 'Aspects of Arthur's Death', p. 63.

⁵⁰ See Felicity Riddy, 'Reading for England: Arthurian Literature and National Consciousness', *Bibliographical Bulletin of the International Arthurian Society*, 43 (1991), 314–32.

⁵¹ See Catherine Batt and Rosalind Field, 'The Romance Tradition', in *The Arthur of the English*, ed. by W. R. J. Barron (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1999), pp. 59–70 (p. 69 and note 35).

⁵² See W. R. J. Barron, 'Alliterative Romance and the French Tradition', in *Middle English Alliterative Poetry*, ed. Lawton, pp. 70–87 (pp. 75–83).

⁵³ David Griffith, 'The Visual History of Guy of Warwick', in *Guy of Warwick: Icon and Ancestor*, ed. Wiggins and Field, pp. 110–32 (p. 122 and notes).

should perhaps look rather more closely at the famous lines that describe Duke Humphrey as commissioning the translation for those 'þat knowe no frensche'.⁵⁴ It is possible that 'French' here does hold stronger geo-cultural values and this translation is a conscious import.

Our assessment of translation activity from Anglo-Norman to Middle English has to be aware of the shadowy presence of lost but detectable versions, complicating the relationship between the romances that have come down to us. This group is potentially quite large – Derek Brewer estimates four lost for each surviving romance manuscript – and serves as a reminder that the extant texts are but the iceberg tip of extensive translation activity.⁵⁵

Most of these translated romances are considered to derive from intervening, now lost, versions either in French or in English (as with *Guy, Amis, Launfal*). A lost tail-rhyme 'Charlemagne and Roland' has been detected behind the Auchinleck Charlemagne romances, and the Otuel material in the Auchinleck and Fillingham manuscripts has been related to a lost Middle English couplet version close to the copy of *Otinell* in Cologny-Geneva, Biblioteca Bodmeriana, MS 168.⁵⁶ *Athelston* and *Sir Orfeo* can plausibly be read as versions of earlier insular works, probably Anglo-Norman.⁵⁷ Again, this group cannot be measured and its boundaries are insecure but it witnesses to a resource of established insular themes and topics and supports the reading of these romances as sophisticated reinterpretations of available and familiar material.

This group becomes larger if we add to lost sources the evidence of lost translations – where there is no extant Middle English version: *Fouke le Fitz Waryn* once existed in Middle English (possibly, but not as definitely as often stated, in alliterative verse) and there is a Latin version of a Middle English *Waldef*.⁵⁸ *Amadas et Ydoine*, whose protagonists are referred to as a famous pair of lovers in the Middle English *Emaré* (line 122), was evidently well known in one or both languages.

We can add to this the evidence of wills and library catalogues which record titles indicating romances, *chansons de geste* and associated texts.⁵⁹ What this complexity and richness of intertextual and inter-vernacular relationships indicate

⁵⁴ *William of Palerne: An Alliterative Romance*, ed. by G. H. V. Bunt (Groningen: Bouma's Boekhuis, 1985), line 5533.

⁵⁵ Brewer is quoted in Harriet Hudson, 'Middle English Popular Romances: The Manuscript Evidence', *Manuscripta*, 28 (1984), 67–78 (p. 68).

⁵⁶ See 'Firimbras' and 'Otuel and Roland', ed. by Mary Isabelle O'Sullivan, EETS, OS 198 (London: Oxford University Press, 1935); H. M. Smyser, 'Charlemagne and Roland and the Auchinleck MS', *Speculum*, 21 (1946), 275–88; Cowen, 'English Charlemagne Romances', 152–6.

⁵⁷ In the Introduction to his edition of *Sir Orfeo* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1954), A. J. Bliss considers the evidence for an Old French or Anglo-Norman intermediary (pp. xl–xli). For a detailed discussion of Old French and Anglo-Norman sources for *Athelston*, see *Athelston*, ed. by A. McL. Trounce, EETS, OS 224 (London: Oxford University Press, 1951, repr. 1957), pp. 6–40.

⁵⁸ *Fouke le Fitz Waryn*, ed. by E. J. Hathaway et al., ANTS 26–8 (Oxford: ANTS, 1975), pp. xxi–xxvi; *Le Roman de Waldef*, ed. by A. J. Holden (Cologny-Geneva: Fondation Martin Bodmer, 1984), pp. 19–20.

⁵⁹ The only complete study, R. M. Wilson's *The Lost Literature of Medieval England* (London: Methuen, 1952), still contains useful material, but needs updating.

is that we are wise to avoid being too certain about the language of any detected lost source; as Smithers points out, such a source could be in either vernacular or both.⁶⁰

However, remarkably few Anglo-Norman romances remain that are not translated into Middle English: the *Tristan* of Thomas and its associated *Folies* (Dean, items 158–60) are only represented by *Sir Tristrem*, and Hue de Rotelande's somewhat laboured sequel to *Ipomedon*, *Protheselaus*, lacks a translation, as does *Fergus*, which Dean places with a group of continental romances with insular connections.

This evidence from the Anglo-Norman corpus helps to clarify the interaction of the factors of availability, demand and competence. The availability of material in Anglo-Norman – not only direct or indirect sources but texts that stimulate demand for more on the same material (such as *Richard*) – has been underestimated mainly because, until the appearance of Dean, there was no comprehensive resource covering copies as well as original production. In several cases, it seems that the presence of a romance in Anglo-Norman England is a prerequisite for that romance's appearing in Middle English translation, and that this exploitation of available material is the first thing to look for in accounting for later selectivity. Those fourteenth-century translators working to produce fiction for an Anglophone audience had a rich resource to hand, of vernacular narrative which had already proved its worth to an English audience. To a perhaps surprising extent their work was accompanied by the simultaneous production of numerous copies of the equivalent texts in Anglo-Norman, giving English audiences a choice of language and in some cases of genre. To paraphrase Pearsall, there is some basis to seeing the fourteenth century as 'the century' of Anglo-Norman romance.⁶¹ This is concurrent production, or at least an overlapping of material across the period of one or more generations, not the narrative of triumphant passing from an obsolete language to a newly energized one beloved of a certain school of literary history. It may be less anachronistic to see the relationship between the two vernaculars as co-operative rather than to adopt the vocabulary of competition, even conflict (so that language choice becomes the locus of class conflict, identity conflict, even gender conflict). After all, John Gower was not unusual in his ability to move from one language to another; some of these author/translators may have been working in both languages.

So Anglo-Norman holdings can often provide a clearer sense of why Middle English translators worked the way they did: what was available, what was already established as appealing to their audience, what was in demand. There is little sign of selectivity between the Anglo-Norman and Middle English stages in that few romances are extant in Anglo-Norman that are not translated into English and, with the important but particular exception of Arthurian material, little evidence of seeking out new material to translate.

⁶⁰ *Havelok*, ed. by G. V. Smithers (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1987), p. liv.

⁶¹ Derek Pearsall, 'The English Romance in the Fifteenth Century', *Essays and Studies*, n.s. 29 (1976), 56–83.

This suggests we need to enquire into the tastes of an earlier generation, as the principle of selection of texts to translate appears to have been that they were already selected and a familiar presence in English literary culture. Choices seem to have often been governed by association with history, as in the case of insular romances such as *Havelok*, or the history of Christendom expressed through the Charlemagne romances, or the history of western culture found in romances of Alexander or Troy. There is also the effect of the apparently arbitrary physical association of texts of shorter romances in collections of historical texts. The manuscript contexts of the Anglo-Norman antecedents of non-cyclical romances indicate the possibility that they caught the eye of translators who were primarily interested in more culturally central texts – Gaimar's *Estoire*, Wace's *Brut* and its derivatives, or *Fierabras*. Again, if this is not arbitrary, then the association is that of an earlier generation and needs to be investigated as such.

There are two models for translation activity here. The first is the familiar one of concurrent writing in two languages for different audiences, both insular but belonging to different linguistic communities, as indicated by one or two contemporary polemical advertisements.⁶² But as well as this socio-linguistic change, I would suggest that the evidence here also indicates something rather less portentous and more domestic – the generational change by which the familiar texts of one generation are reissued in more accessible format for their children or grandchildren. In this case translation is a matter of updating rather than of ideological purpose or identity politics. This may be one explanation for the way in which expectations that the move from French into English should show evidence of popularization are frequently confounded by the many examples which show no lowering of literary sophistication. Different linguistic communities based on generational change do not differ from each other as much as those based on changing social status.

So seeing the relationship between French-language and English-language romance as an inter-vernacular, even inter-generational, movement rather than inter-national movement between the two languages poses a new problem and opens up a new area for research, that of understanding the choices made by an earlier generation of writers and scribes in their selection of works for a franco-phone insular audience.

The further implication of this concerns not so much what is there as what is missing – why no production of Anglo-Norman romance after the flowering of the twelfth to early thirteenth centuries? The gap is not filled by Middle English. It seems that between *Gui* in the early thirteenth century and *Auchinleck* in the 1330s new romances written in England, in either vernacular, can just about be counted on the fingers of one hand. If we conveniently refer to the group of lost

⁶² *Cursor Mundi*, ed. by Richard Morris, EETS, OS 57, 59, 62, 66, 68, 99, 101 (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trübner, 1874–93), lines 234–5; *Of Arthour and of Merlin*, ed. by O. D. Macrae-Gibson, EETS, OS 268, 279 (London: Oxford University Press, 1973, 1979), lines 21–6. These advertisements are too readily taken at face value; as Thorlac Turville-Petre argues, 'nationalist polemics sets up a scheme of languages in conflict' (*England the Nation: Language, Literature and National Identity, 1290–1340* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996), p. 181).

romances to fill the gap the question remains as to why they are so comprehensively lost.

Furthermore, this throws into strong relief the appearance in the fourteenth century of the large number of (mostly) short romances that are not translations in any sense of the word (such as *Emaré*, *Sir Isumbras*, *Sir Amadace*, *Gamelyn*, *The Erle of Tolous* or *Sir Degaré*) although there has always been hesitancy about dubbing them original. These seem to represent a modernizing of the romance culture of England in the fourteenth century, a move in large terms from the historical and masculine to the devotional and feminine area of storytelling. There is also openness to an eclectic range of material and a taste for a short, elliptical, lyrical or even clumsily truncated form. Seen against the background of what is already available in insular literature – with the exception of texts such as *Florence*, *Octavian*, *Floris* – this looks genuinely new and largely unprecedented, not just new in English.

The evidence discussed here will inevitably be corrected in points of detail: some omissions in Dean's catalogue have been noted here, some of her dating and placing of manuscripts is at odds with other authorities, and doubtless there is more to be discovered. The interpretation of her material offered here is open to considerable variation; in particular bringing other genres into the picture would offer new perspectives, as would a full consideration of fifteenth-century romance. But what is clear is that an assessment of the romance culture in medieval England in its totality, and the translation activity that exploited the movements between languages and linguistic groups, requires recognition of the deeply bilingual nature of fourteenth-century literature.

Reading a Christian–Saracen Debate in Fifteenth-Century Middle English Charlemagne Romance: The Case of *Turpines Story*

Diane Vincent

After a crushing defeat of Christian forces at Kosovo in 1448 by Sultan Murad II, Constantinople fell in 1453 to Murad's son, the ambitious Mehmed II, who styled himself as a new Caesar and continued to move into Serbia, Hungary, and ultimately even parts of Italy. The advance of the Ottoman Turks into the borderlands of western Europe was a pressing foreign policy issue for late-medieval Christian Europe.¹ To fifteenth-century readers of the exploits of Charlemagne in the *chansons de geste*, however, these disastrous losses could sound a familiar tune, the prelude, in fact, to a song of Christian victory over the fearsome Saracen invaders:

Some men loveth to here tell
Of doughty knyghtes that were fell [...]
And some of venterous knyghtes olde
That for our Lorde dyde fyght –
As Charles dyde, that noble Kynge,
That hethen downe dyde brynge,
Thrughe the helpe of God almyghty.
He wanne fro the hethen houndes
The spere and nayles of Crystes woundes,
And also the crowne of thorne –
And many a ryche relyke mo
Mawgré of them he wanne also,
And kylled them even and morne.
The Turkes and the paynmys bolde
He felled doune many a folde;
Durst none stande hym beforne.
Charles gan them so affraye
That the catyves myght curse the daye
And the tyme that they were borne!
Now Machamyte, that Turke untrue

¹ R. W. Southern, *Western Views of Islam in the Middle Ages* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1962), p. 84. For a broader perspective, see also *Western Views of Islam in Medieval and Early Modern Europe: Perception of Other*, ed. by David R. Blanks and Michael Frassetto (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1999), especially the chapters by Blanks and Nancy Bisaha.

To our Lorde Cryst Jhesu,
And to His lawe also,
Many Crysten man slayne hath he.²

Here the author of *Capystranus*, a late fifteenth-century account of the 1456 siege of Belgrade by Mehmed II, prompts his readers to look back to the *chansons de geste* as a paradigm for understanding the military achievements of Mehmed II ('Machamyte') as well as his surprising failure to take Belgrade from its overwhelmingly outnumbered Christian defenders. Readers of Caxton's *Charles the Grete* may have recalled that Jerusalem too had once seemed irrevocably lost to advancing sultans only to be won back by the indefatigably crusading Charlemagne at the request of the king of Constantinople.³ The convergence of the genres of romance and historiography allows *Capystranus* to imply that Friar Johan Capistranus and Janos Hunyadi, by lifting the Turkish siege of Belgrade, were replaying the opening strains of the same theme of divinely aided Christian triumph over a rival faith and rival civilization.⁴ In doing so, *Capystranus* also demonstrates, albeit in an exceptionally direct way, what Helen Cooper has called the 'immediate topicality' of Middle English romances after 1400: their awareness and exploitation of contemporary religious and political issues.⁵

Such topicality is usually registered in a more oblique fashion than the blunt approach of *Capystranus*. As Cooper has pointed out, the significance of the Ottoman threat is also revealed in the choice of pagans as antagonists for many knights in fifteenth-century romances.⁶ I am concerned here with a subset of those knights – namely, those whose exploits are recounted in the Middle English Charlemagne romances composed or copied in the fifteenth century – and the verbal confrontations between those orthodox Christian knights and Saracen 'pagans' in which religious language is used to convert or defeat

² *Capystranus*, in *Middle English Romances*, ed. by Stephen H. A. Shepherd (New York: Norton, 1995), pp. 391–408 (lines 37–8, 41–60); the poem survives only in fragments from three separate printings between about 1515 and 1530.

³ William Caxton, *The Lyf of the Noble and Crysten Prynce, Charles the Grete*, ed. by Sidney J. H. Herrtage, EETS, ES 36–7 (London: Trübner, 1881; repr. London: Oxford University Press, 1967), pp. 31–5.

⁴ For the Christian West's struggle with Islam as a rival civilization, see *Medieval Christian Perceptions of Islam*, ed. by John Victor Tolan (New York: Garland, 1996), pp. xix–xx and *passim*. The 1456 victory was celebrated with public processions and services in Oxford as well as throughout Europe: see Bonnie Millar-Heggie, 'Sanctity, Savagery and Saracens in *Capystranus*: Fifteenth Century Christian-Ottoman Relations', *Al-Masāq*, 14 (2002), 113–21 (p. 114).

⁵ Helen Cooper, 'Romance After 1400', in *The Cambridge History of Medieval English Literature*, ed. by David Wallace (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), pp. 690–719 (p. 690). Cooper notes how contemporary political history and romance collide and mutually inform one another in *Capystranus* (p. 712).

⁶ *Ibid.* p. 698. Confusing ardently monotheist Islam with a tri-theistic paganism was a common mistake in the Middle Ages, indebted to both anti-Muslim polemic and ignorance; see *Medieval Christian Perceptions*, pp. xiv–xviii.

non-believers.⁷ Even though these romances cast an eye to developments abroad and the very real possibility of a direct clash between Christian Europe and Islam, I am particularly interested in how they resonate with religious upheavals much closer to home. The Turks were posing a threat to the faith on the outskirts of Europe, but for the first time in its history England was also facing a home-grown sect of misbelievers: the Wycliffites. By 1400, the Wycliffites' commitment to vernacularization gave the dissident sect the potential of broad appeal and the power to stir up a popular debate over issues of the faith.⁸ In an age of anti-clericalism and increasing lay education, ecclesiastical authorities of the early fifteenth century were faced with the practical challenge of how to dissuade intellectuals from arguable positions as well as turn any lay apostates to an orthodoxy that had not been effectively taught to them in the first place. Although proponents of Wycliffite ideas disappeared from the university by the 1430s, throughout the century anti-heretical activity remained on bishops' agendas and Lollards were still hauled before ecclesiastical courts for opinions with a Wycliffite cast. Surveying these developments, the chroniclers Henry Knighton and Adam Usk linked Wyclif and his followers to Mohammed and the spread of Islam, itself regarded as a sort of Christian heresy.⁹ In a historical context where debate could be dangerous and the Saracens of the past could be invoked to understand the Turks and perhaps even

⁷ The Middle English Charlemagne romances composed or copied in the fifteenth century include Caxton's *Charles the Grete* (STC 5013; c. 1485) and his edition of the *Four Sonnes of Aymon* (STC 1007; c. 1489); the *Sowdon of Babylon* (Princeton, NJ, Princeton University Library Garrett Collection No. 140; mid-fifteenth century); *Firumbras* and *Otuel and Roland* (London, BL, Additional MS 37492, c. 1450–1500); *Sege of Melayne* and *Duke Rowland and Sir Otuell of Spayne* (London, BL, Additional MS 31042, mid-fifteenth century); the fragment of the *Song of Roland* (London, BL, Lansdowne MS 388, c. 1475–1500); *The Taill of Rauf Coilyear* (STC 5487; surviving edition c. 1572, but composed in the late fifteenth century); and *Turpines Story* (San Marino, CA, Huntington Library, MS HM28561, mid-fifteenth century). I am excluding the three English Charlemagne romances copied prior to 1400 (*Sir Firumbras* in Oxford, Bodleian Library, Ashmole MS 33 and *Roland and Vernagu* and *Otuel A Knight* in Edinburgh, NLS, Advocates' MS 19.2.1, the Auchinleck manuscript), the Anglo-Norman translation of *The Pseudo-Turpin Chronicle* by William de Briane in the early thirteenth century (London, BL, Arundel MS 220), as well as the sixteenth-century romance *Huon of Bourdeaux* (STC 13998.5–99; first edition c. 1515–34?).

⁸ As the character Dubius boasts in a dialogue found in a late fifteenth-century manuscript: 'And y haue made on this londe / a newe curtesy y-fonde, / that whan men beth y-sette / and are serued at hire mette / y brynge forth quare and quid / and serue hem there-with, / that is to say whi and what; / and so eche man spekith of þat, / so þat a burel sleve / with-oute ony mannys leve, / and brynge forth quid and quare, / and preest and clerk he wyl nat spare, / and meve so hye such a question; / þan he confoundith his reson, / and so purgh þe answer of what and why / bothe fallen in-to heresy': 'Lucidus and Dubius', in *Non-Cycle Plays and the Winchester Dialogues: Facsimiles of Plays and Fragments in Various Manuscripts and the Dialogues in Winchester College MS 33*, ed. by Norman Davis, Leeds Texts and Monographs: Medieval Drama Facsimiles 5 (Leeds: University of Leeds School of English, 1979), pp. 179–91 (lines 44–59).

⁹ Henry Knighton, *Knighton's Chronicle, 1337–1396*, ed. and trans. by G. H. Martin (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995), p. 304. According to *The Chronicle of Adam Usk, 1377–1421*, ed. and trans. by C. Given-Wilson (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1997), 'Like Mohammed, the followers of this Master John [Wyclif], by preaching in favour of things that were pleasing to the rich and powerful, [...] most wickedly incited numerous massacres, plots, disputes, quarrels, and rebellions, which continue to this day' (p. 7).

the Lollards of the present, do we see any genuine religious dialogue in crusading romances? Do the verbal exchanges between warring Christians and Saracens in fifteenth-century Charlemagne romances portray religious discourse as capable of truly turning someone to belief when he or she is under threat of death? And for the fifteenth-century readers of Charlemagne romances, could such exchanges have been mapped onto the contemporary religious disputes of the home front, where vernacular theological debates could force Bishop Reginald Pecock into retirement after his 1457 abjuration of heresy as well as lead the obstinate Lollard to the stake? I will probe these larger questions in what follows by means of a careful look at one of the most intriguing verbal confrontations of late Middle English Charlemagne romance: the theological disputation between the Christian knight Roland and the Saracen giant Ferakutte in *Turpines Story*, a fifteenth-century translation of the exceedingly popular *Pseudo-Turpin Chronicle*.¹⁰ Standing at the mid-point of the century, when Constantinople fell to Mehmed II and Pecock fell into public condemnation, its own manuscript production cut short by the political misfortunes of the Lancastrian partisans who commissioned it, *Turpines Story* betrays its own ‘immediate topicality’ in its timely interest in conversion and religious discourse. It is in the light of these interests that we should understand the question-and-answer debate between Roland and Ferakutte and its place in romance as well as in late-medieval English religious discourse.

‘The disputacion of good Rowlande’

During a truce in a gruelling two-day combat between Roland and Ferakutte, and quite appropriately after a refreshing midday nap, we find the following exchange in *Turpines Story*:

Ben wen þis giauntte herde him name Criste, he askede, ‘what is þicke “Criste” in whome þou beleuyste?’ Þen seid Roulonde, ‘Þe Sonne of God þe Fadur of heuene, þe wiche was bore of a mayde; he dyede on a crosse; he was beride in a sepulcre; he arose þe þredde day; he styede into heuene and syzte in þe riztte syde of his fadur.’ Þen seid þe giauntte, ‘We beleue þat maker of heuene and of herthe is oo God, but he is neyþer “fadur” ne “sonne” ne “holy goste”,

¹⁰ The twelfth-century *Pseudo-Turpin Chronicle* was one of the most popular texts of its time: it appears in over two hundred manuscripts, it was translated into at least eleven European vernaculars, and it has a distinct and thriving family of insular manuscripts. A very thorough critical bibliography can be found in Susan E. Farrier, *The Medieval Charlemagne Legend: An Annotated Bibliography* (New York: Garland, 1993). For editions of two of the major Latin versions of *The Pseudo-Turpin Chronicle*, see *Historia Karoli Magni et Rotholandi ou Chronique du Pseudo-Turpin*, ed. by C. Meredith Jones (Paris: Droz, 1936; repr. Geneva: Slatkine, 1972). Stephen H. A. Shepherd provides an excellent brief guide to recent scholarship, with a particular focus on the insular tradition and its relationship to *Turpines Story*, in ‘The Middle English *Pseudo-Turpin Chronicle*’, *Medium Ævum*, 65 (1996), pp. 19–34. He has supplemented this discussion in the introduction to his edition of the text, *Turpines Story: A Middle English Translation of The Pseudo-Turpin Chronicle*, EETS, OS 322 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004). Hereafter, references to *Turpines Story* will be cited by page number in the text.

for þer is neyþer he þat gete a sonne, ne a sonne þat was igette; eke þere is oo God and noȝt .iij. “parsonys”. Þen seid Roulonde, ‘In þat þou seyste þere is oo God, þou seyste wele, but þou seyste þat þer bethe nouȝtte .iij. parsonys, þere þou erriste.’ Þen seid Roulonde, ‘Yff þou beleue in þe Fadur, beleue in þe Sonne and in þe Holy Goste, for þe Fadur is God, and þese .iij. parsonys beth oo God.’ Þen seid Ferakutte, ‘If þe “fadur” bethe God and þe “sonne” be God and þe “holy goste” be God, þen þere be .iij. goddis – and þat may noȝt be.’ (p. 26)

The exchange moves on from these Trinitarian quibbles into a lengthy series of questions and answers between the two combatants. The structure of the exchange is based on a modified Apostles’ Creed. Roland recites the creed to describe Christ, then Ferakutte systematically questions and Roland defends each discrete proposition of the creed. Ferakutte’s questioning of Roland’s assertions does not always take a grammatically interrogative form but also consists of challenging or refuting them with counterclaims or statements of sheer incredulity: ‘If þe “fadur” bethe God and þe “sonne” be God and þe “holy goste” be God, þen þere be .iij. goddis – and þat may noȝt be. [...] I perceyue wele wat þou seyste, but how he styede to heuene, as þou seyst, I can noȝt se it ne belyue it’ (pp. 26, 28). Roland too stages a counter-interrogation for Ferakutte: “Canste þou beleue þat God made Adam?” “Yee,” seid Ferakutte. “Þen,” seid Roulonde, “riȝt þen as Adam was not gete of anoþer and yut he gate sonnys, so þe fadur of heuene was not of anoþer”’ (p. 27).

The battle between Roland and this Saracen giant is now known to have been translated into Middle English from *The Pseudo-Turpin Chronicle* at least three times: in the Auchinleck manuscript’s *Roland and Vernagu* (c. 1330–40), in Caxton’s *Charles the Grete* (c. 1485), and here in *Turpines Story*.¹¹ Discussions of the battle in the better-known versions of *Roland and Vernagu* and Caxton’s *Charles the Grete* have almost invariably referred to the series of theological questions and answers as a kind of ‘catechesis’. Janet Cowen has noted *Roland and Vernagu*’s ‘catechetical centre’, regarding it as ‘fundamentally didactic’, and criticized Caxton’s version as lacking a similar ‘catechetical flavour’.¹² Phillipa Hardman has compared the ‘elaborate catechizing’ of *Roland and Vernagu* with other moments in Middle English Charlemagne romances, noting that ‘the motif of the converted Saracen [...] provides a natural opportunity for catechesis as Christian knights seek to convey the essential truths of the Christian faith to unbelievers. No doubt one aim

¹¹ ‘*The Taill of Rauf Coilyear with the fragments of ‘Roland and Vernagu’ and ‘Otuel’*’, ed. by Sidney J. H. Herrtage, EETS, ES 39 (London: Trübner, 1882; repr. London: Oxford University Press, 1969), pp. 37–61; *Charles the Grete*, pp. 221–5; *Turpines Story*, pp. 23–9.

¹² Janet Cowen, ‘The English Charlemagne Romances’, in *Roland and Charlemagne in Europe: Essays on the Reception and Transformation of a Legend*, ed. by Karen Pratt (London: King’s College, Centre for Late Antique and Medieval Studies, 1996), pp. 149–68 (pp. 154, 166). She strongly identifies Vernagu as an ‘intelligent questioning candidate’ (presumably for baptism as an adult convert) who ‘submits to instruction in Christianity’ but ultimately ‘elides the roles of potential convert and apostate’ (p. 154). W. R. J. Barron also notices a language of submission; see *English Medieval Romance* (London and New York: Longman, 1987), p. 93.

of such passages was to remind the reader or listener of these same truths.¹³ The editor of *Turpines Story*, Stephen Shepherd, echoes this critical trend when he suggests in passing that readers might have found the text as a whole ‘catechistic’.¹⁴

What Cowen, Hardman and, to a lesser degree, Shepherd all imply is that the exchange between Roland and the Saracen giant ought to be read as a kind of catechesis, whether for the Saracen or the Christian reader, for whom the debate reiterates and rationalizes central Christian doctrines. Presenting doctrine in a narrative form is indeed an effective strategy to increase its hold on the reader’s imagination, especially when that doctrine is itself a story as in the case of the Apostles’ Creed. It is also true there is some warrant for regarding Vernagu as, among other things, a recalcitrant catechumen in *Roland and Vernagu*.¹⁵ However, the appearance of doctrine in a confrontation between rival faiths need not be primarily instructional, and we should not be too quick to label every version of the dialogue between Roland and the Saracen giant as merely a species of opportunistic didacticism. When we consider the historical context of *Turpines Story*, it becomes difficult to regard this question-and-answer sequence as a catechesis, whether of Saracen giant or Christian reader.

In the century that opened with energetic Wycliffite dissent and Archbishop Arundel’s *Constitutions* (1407/09), vernacular theological questioning was a suspect activity. The ninth Constitution, for example, forbade disputation on articles determined by the church except to acquire a true understanding of them. The strictures envisioned by the *Constitutions* were wide-ranging, covering not just the university, but the home, the churchyard, and even the grammar school.¹⁶ Even though *Turpines Story* is clearly refuting Trinitarian heresies and not proposing them for serious consideration, a concern to refute heretics was no defence against an accusation of heresy, as the case of Reginald Pecock confirms. *Turpines Story* not only represents arguments against the Christian creed in the vernacular, but also represents a challenge to orthodoxy in the form of the sceptical questioner stigmatized by the *Constitutions*. In order to look at the role that this intriguing

¹³ Phillipa Hardman, ‘The Sege of Melayne: A Fifteenth-Century Reading’, in *Tradition and Transformation in Medieval Romance*, ed. by Rosalind Field (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 1999), pp. 71–86 (p. 77, note 17; p. 86).

¹⁴ *Turpines Story*, ed. Shepherd, p. xlix. ‘Catechistic’ is here only one in a wide-ranging list of potential readings of the text.

¹⁵ Cowen’s strongly catechetical reading of *Roland and Vernagu*, for example, is supported by the translator’s unique interpolation of an intervening angel who identifies Roland’s actions as a doomed attempt to ‘shriue’ Vernagu (lines 812–14). However, the versifier of *Roland and Vernagu* is widely acknowledged to be a bungler, both as a poet and as a story-teller. *Roland and Vernagu* is also marred by the versifier’s inability to remember that Vernagu can only be wounded in the navel. This key plot detail is overlooked when Roland sweeps Vernagu’s head from his shoulders. The versifier’s additions to the story should be regarded in light of these struggles, and certainly not as elucidations of the function of the episode in more adept handlings of *The Pseudo-Turpin Chronicle* material.

¹⁶ David Wilkins, *Concilia Magnae Britanniae et Hiberniae*, 4 vols (London: Gosling, 1737), III, pp. 314–19. The fifth Constitution warns schoolmasters not to let their students dispute matters of the faith; the eighth and eleventh Constitutions set strictures on what could be disputed in the schools; and the fourth Constitution cautions preachers and teachers against bringing articles of faith into doubt.

verbal confrontation plays in *Turpines Story*, I will examine this catechetical reading, then consider the emphases of *Turpines Story* in comparison with other fifteenth-century Middle English Charlemagne romances, and finally situate Roland and Ferakutte's debate in *Turpines Story* as a whole.

Should we regard the debate between Roland and Ferakutte in *Turpines Story* as Ferakutte's catechesis? According to the *Middle English Dictionary*, Middle English usage of variants of the word 'catechism' assumes the catechumen is already a believer, either a recent convert who is not yet baptized or a baptized child about to be confirmed.¹⁷ It is from the position of prior faith that medieval catechism generally takes place, but Ferakutte is obviously not in this position. He is not a convert but a potential convert, outside the Christian faith and thus technically outside the reach of catechesis. Ferakutte himself emphasizes this outsider status by indicating his commitment to another religious community when he proclaims, 'We beleue þat maker of heuene and of herthe is oo God' (p. 26). While he does seem to grant the truth of Roland's arguments (a point to which I will return), he ultimately fights to prove Roland's faith is false. Also, only a very strange sort of catechism would begin by catechumen and catechizer attempting to trick each other with language, the very medium of instruction. Before Ferakutte interrogates the Christian creed, when he is apparently about to reveal his sole vulnerability to Roland, he attempts to dissemble it by translating it into another tongue, which Roland then pretends not to have understood even though he has. This mutual deceit is drawn out strongly by the translator of *Turpines Story*, whose interpolations I have italicized. 'Whenne Rowlonde had hard þat worde he hylde his pese and turnyd away his here as þow he had nozt merked þat worde, for this giaunte seid this worde in the Spayennyshe speche, þe whiche þe giaunte went þat Rowlond vnderstode nozt – but Roulonde vnderstode riht wele' (p. 25).¹⁸ The translator makes explicit the linguistic trickery of both parties that other texts leave implicit. Such conspicuous deceptions do not suit the confessional context of catechism.

Ferakutte's outsider status, the combative context, and the deception practised by both all work to undermine reading this exchange as his catechism. Let us for the moment put to one side the idea that this episode conveys a species of religious didacticism in order that we might consider another model, one which better fits the exchange between the two combatants: scholastic disputation. In fact, a scholastic reading is hinted at by the capitulum for this chapter in *Turpines Story*, 'The bataille of Ferekot and the disputacion of good Rowlande' (p. 23). 'Good Rowlande' is actually a mistranslation of *The Pseudo-Turpin Chronicle's* capitulum, 'optima disputatione Rolandi'. This is not so much a good Roland as a great disputation. In a great disputation, the linguistic wiliness I have already noted is not nearly as problematic, since part of what a disputant tries to do is to trick his opponent

¹⁷ *Middle English Dictionary*, ed. by Hans Kurath, Sherman M. Kuhn and Robert E. Lewis, 17 vols (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 1952–); s.v. 'cathecumine' and 'caticizen'.

¹⁸ For Shepherd's comment on the treatment of this moment in most Latin versions, see p. 72, note to lines 792–4.

into saying something unlikely or nonsensical.¹⁹ Disputation suits the combative context of the questions and answers far better than catechesis. It also makes the passage far more humorous, inverting the cliché of the clerk whose disputative battles make him a knight; here the knight puts down his weapons and turns clerk.

Roland and Ferakutte also adopt loosely scholastic roles, techniques, and aims during the course of their conversation. According to John of Salisbury, disputation ideally took place between matched contestants, and it is precisely at a stalemate in their physical conflict that Roland and Ferakutte engage in debate.²⁰ After a day and a half of fighting, both have been unhorsed, they have slain each other's horses and finally reached an impasse: Ferakutte's 'grette swerde' has been stymied by Roland's 'grete knabbit longe staffe, with the whiche he bare of Ferakuttes strokes and bete faste on Ferakutte – but he hurte him noȝt' (p. 25). Sitting together after the giant's nap, Roland plays the scholastic role of the *respondens*, first enumerating a set of theses about Christ by reciting his modified Apostles's Creed. Ferakutte plays the role of *opponens*, challenging the likelihood of each proposition in the order set by Roland. They use scholastic techniques, most noticeably the technique of distinguishing in a proposition what one affirms from what one denies, an activity sometimes indicated in Middle English with the words 'graunt' and 'forsake'. We have already seen Roland use the technique in the opening foray: 'In þat þou seyste þere is oo God, þou seyste wele, but þou seyste þat þer bethe nouȝtte .iij. parsonys, þere þou erriste.' Later, Ferakutte grants Roland one claim, but immediately denies the next point: "Hit may wele be þat he was bore of a mayde. Sithe he is Goddis sonne, he myȝt noȝt dyȝe on þe crosse as þou seydeste before; for God dyethe noȝt." Þen seid Roulonde, "Þou graunttiste þat he was bore o man of a maide" (p. 27). Roland immediately makes a classic disputative move by seizing on common ground and attempting to make the case that granting one proposition necessitates acceptance of the next: 'And yf þou canste beleue þat he his bore as a man, þou muste beleue his passiounne, for he dyȝed as a man' (p. 28). Moreover, as the questions and answers proceed, it is clear that Ferakutte does press Roland to defend his position. Although it may appear to modern readers that Ferakutte gives up too easily, his acknowledgements that '[h]it may wele be' could also be read by a medieval Christian audience as a mark of a good disputant. John of Salisbury quotes Aristotle as saying: 'In a dispute, both he who questions in a contentious fashion, and he who, in answering, refuses to grant what is evident, and declines to meet the real issue the questioner raises, are at fault.'²¹ Ferakutte would be a poor disputant if he failed to grant what was clearly shown (in the eyes of the Christian audience) and perversely continued to question a point established with reasonable likelihood. Another typical strategy of disputation was

¹⁹ John of Salisbury, *The Metalogicon of John of Salisbury: A Twelfth-Century Defense of the Verbal and Logical Arts of the Trivium*, ed. and trans. by Daniel D. McGarry (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1955; repr. 1962), book 3, ch. 10.

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Ibid.

generalizing to universals from particulars.²² This is Roland's most common tactic in his arguments from analogy. For example, in his explanation of how three can yet be one, Roland invokes a number of different analogies from nature, including that of a harp, an almond, the sun, a wheel, and even the person of Ferakutte himself. Roland's analogies are then followed by inductions from their established 'triunity' to the triune nature of God (pp. 26–7).

Now modern readers will probably find Roland's arguments unconvincing and Ferakutte a bit over-credulous, but if what is going on is a 'great disputation' then what they are aiming at is not iron-clad certitude but probable truths.²³ Ferakutte signals his understanding of the probabilistic enterprise in which they are engaged when he grants the possibility of the virgin birth after questioning Roland three times on the issue: 'Hit may wele be þat he was bore of a mayde' (p. 27). If this is the case, Ferakutte's apparent acceptance does not necessarily imply a change in his beliefs, but rather indicates that Roland has sufficiently supported his claims for the purposes of the scholastic joust. Ferakutte's ultimate rejection of Christianity, then, is not a failure of catechism or even a sign of fiendish recalcitrance, but the indication of Roland's successful disputation, since Ferakutte has only granted the probability of the Christian creed, not its certainty.

This scholastic flavour is not an innovation of the Middle English *Turpines Story*, but comes from its twelfth-century source, *The Pseudo-Turpin Chronicle*, and there is some evidence to support the notion that readers of the dialogue would have recognized its scholastic overtones. When we look at the manuscript context of the Latin *Pseudo-Turpin Chronicle* in the insular tradition, we find two general categories of reception.²⁴ The first, that of exemplary history, is found in two manuscripts. London, BL, Cotton MS Claudius B.VII (thirteenth century) contains mostly chronicles and genealogies with a strong insular focus, while BL, Cotton MS Vespasian A.XIII (fifteenth century) includes *The Pseudo-Turpin Chronicle* as one of a collection of texts *de viris illustribus*.²⁵ However, *The Pseudo-Turpin Chronicle* is not only found in the company of other chronicles but also makes its way into scholastic miscellanies. The huge fifteenth-century Franciscan miscellany Dublin, Trinity College, MS 667, places *The Pseudo-Turpin Chronicle* in a compilation that begins with Honorius Augustodunensis's *Elucidarius* and other pedagogical texts and collections of commonplaces, but also includes the romance of *Fierabras*, *De Spiritu Guidonis*, a chronicle of Irish history, St Patrick's *vita* and *Purgatory*, excerpts from Peter Comestor's *Historia Scholastica*, a tabular synopsis of Christian dogma, a form of confession, and a moral-theological

²² Ibid.

²³ John of Salisbury again: 'dialectic neither aspires to the weighty authority of [apodictical] teaching, nor does it become the plaything of political currents. Neither does it seduce [the unwary] by fallacies. Rather it makes inquiry into the truth, using the ready instrument of moderate probability' (book 2, ch. 3).

²⁴ For a list and some comments on these manuscripts, see Shepherd, 'The Middle English *Pseudo-Turpin Chronicle*', p. 22; p. 32, notes 25–8.

²⁵ *Catalogue of the Manuscripts in the Cottonian Library Deposited in the British Museum* (London: Hansard, 1802), pp. 192, 435–6.

catechism. *The Pseudo-Turpin Chronicle* appears here in the middle of a long set of texts dealing with various aspects of religious life and belief.²⁶ Even more interesting is London, BL, Harley MS 2361, whose earliest known owner was part of Cambridge University's intellectual milieu.²⁷ This theological codex, besides containing a brief explication of the Decalogue and the articles of the faith, also records resolved theological *quaestiones* such as 'Utrum Dominus noster Ihesus Cristus passus est mortem juste vel injuste' ('Whether our Lord Jesus Christ suffered death justly or unjustly').²⁸ Like Dublin, Trinity College, MS 667, it incorporates dialogues such as the *Elucidarius* and John the Damascene's *Barlam and Jehosaphat*. One of Harley 2361's most intriguing features is that it extracts only the chapter from *The Pseudo-Turpin Chronicle* that relates the conversation between Roland and Ferakutte. That 'Bellum Ferracuti Gigantis et Rotholandi; e Turpino'²⁹ ('the Battle of the Giant Ferakutte and Roland; from the Turpin') appears in the context of a whole manuscript preoccupied with debates and *quaestiones* suggests a reading of their discussion as a model disputation for students, probably with tongue firmly in cheek.³⁰ Harley 2361 thus carries to the next logical step the possibility indicated by Dublin, Trinity College, MS 667: the *Pseudo-Turpin* could be placed in the sphere of academic theology. In doing so, both manuscripts suggest the disputative battle between Roland and Ferakutte may well have been read as a mock exemplar of theological dispute.

Thus scholastic disputation provides both a compelling model for *Turpines Story*'s series of questions and answers and a further possibility besides catechization for how that exchange could be read in the fifteenth century. Moreover, for a reader of *Turpines Story* the scholasticism of 'the disputacion of good Rowlande' could have taken on peculiar resonances in England during the mid-fifteenth century, when vernacularizing disputative, academic modes of theology put one in the dubious company of John Wyclif, William Thorpe and Reginald Pecock – all of whom bore the stigma of heresy. That readers could have had some awareness of these resemblances is indicated in the fifteenth-century fate of this disputation. *Turpines Story* is the only fifteenth-century retelling of *The Pseudo-Turpin Chronicle* in Middle English which keeps these scholastic questions and answers. Caxton's *Charles the Grete* changes Roland's proclamation of the Apostles' Creed into a brief narrative of the fall, incarnation, passion and salvation offered by Christ and then casts the theological questions entirely off-stage: 'after that Feragus had made to hym many questyons in the fayth, and that Rolland had ansuerd to

²⁶ Marvin L. Colker, *Trinity College Library Dublin: Descriptive Catalogue of the Mediaeval and Renaissance Latin Manuscripts*, 2 vols (Aldershot: Scolar, 1991), II, pp. 1123–64.

²⁷ Cyril Ernest Wright, *Fontes Harleiani* (London: British Museum, 1972), p. 260, s.v. 'John Odlyn'.

²⁸ *A Catalogue of the Harleian Manuscripts in the British Museum*, 4 vols (London: Eyre & Strahan, 1808–12), II, pp. 667–8.

²⁹ This title is from the entry in *A Catalogue of the Harleian Manuscripts*, II, p. 668.

³⁰ The kind of elementary disputative technique demonstrated by Roland, for example, cannot compare with the signs of more advanced disputative skill Fiona Somerset has identified: 'Vernacular Argumentation in *The Testimony of William Thorpe*', *Mediaeval Studies*, 58 (1996), 207–41.

hym honourably in euery poynte.³¹ In *Otuel and Roland*, the reader is promised an account of the debate between Roland and Fernagu, but the chapter detailing the encounter is the only one omitted from the whole series of chapters adapted from that section of *The Pseudo-Turpin Chronicle*.³² No other Christian-Saracen confrontations in Middle English Charlemagne romances approach anything like the debate between Roland and Ferakutte. Statements of belief serve more as battle cries and taunts, political ultimatums, and convenient line-fillers. They are not fodder for discussion; instead they are the fixed initial conditions that articulate the nature of disputed allegiances.³³

These fifteenth-century omissions from *Charles the Grete* and from *Otuel and Roland* of material present in thirteenth- and fourteenth-century versions of the story are hard to explain. Caxton certainly does not shy away from lengthy religious passages for his readers to meditate upon, and in many ways his narrative is more theologically demanding than clichéd defences of the Apostles' Creed. Neither he nor the author of *Otuel and Roland* avoids presenting the articles of the creed. Instead, it was the representation of theological question-and-answer with scholastic overtones that was at issue in Middle English. While a straightforward sampling of didacticism seems unlikely to elicit objections, we have already noted how the vernacularization of theological questions by dissenting academics was deemed problematic, first by Arundel and later by Pecock's contemporaries. By setting aside the centrality of catechesis to a reading of this episode, we begin to unmask the complexity involved when disputative religious discourse is placed within an arena of dissent and violence, an arena that links crusading romances to fifteenth-century controversies over heresy. If, as I am suggesting, vernacularizing a debate about the faith was still seen as risky in the latter half of a century that opened with Arundel's prohibition on debating articles of belief, then to later fifteenth-century ears Ferakutte may well have sounded rather like a Lollard.

Converting Saracens, Converting Heretics

'Ferragu is only occasionally plausibly Muslim in his objections and frequently the contrary, he is often a Christian heretic, and almost consistently a free-thinking

³¹ *Charles the Grete*, p. 224.

³² In *Otuel and Roland*, lines 15–17 declare the intention to describe the fight with the Saracen giant; lines 1692–2786 are adapted from the material in chapters 16, 18–27 of the *Historia Karoli Magni* (chapters 19, 21–5 of *Turpines Story*). The Roland and Ferakutte material comprises the entire missing chapter.

³³ Though not a Charlemagne romance *per se*, *Capystranus* also avoids direct debate about religious dogma, in spite of what seems like ideal conditions: an army of schoolmasters. 'There was scole maystres of the best; / Many of them were brought to rest / That wolde not lere theyr laye!' (lines 423–5). This passage transforms crusade into scholarly discipline for those wayward students who refuse to learn, and yet there is no direct representation of the schooling despite a ready abundance of professionals trained in debate.

rationalist.³⁴ Norman Daniel's assessment of the Saracen giant in the *Entrée d'Espagne*, another fourteenth-century version of *The Pseudo-Turpin Chronicle*, is also an apt characterization of Ferakutte in *Turpines Story*. For late medieval England, the heretic and the rationalist met in the spectre of the Lollard.³⁵ Wyclif's philosophical realism and keen interest in reason as a heuristic was easily conflated by contemporaries, both friendly and hostile, with an approach to popular theology that relied heavily on rationalism and appeals to common sense, so much so that an anti-Lollard activist like Pecock could be condemned as a heretic for elevating the use of reason in matters of the faith. In *Turpines Story*, some of Ferakutte's criticisms of the Creed also share a similar spirit with rationalist denials of transubstantiation by the notorious heretic John Badby. This affinity comes out strongly when we set statements made by Ferakutte and Badby side by side, along with Thomas Hoccleve's emphasis on Badby's over-reliance upon reason during his trial:

[Ferakutte to Roland:] If þe 'fadur' bethe God and þe 'sonne' be God and þe 'holy goste' be God, þen þere be .iij. goddis – and þat may noȝt be. [...] But how was he, þat God vnmade, imade man? [...] I labore to wete how þat a maide myȝtte conseȝue withoute feleship or werke of man. [...] He myȝt noȝt dȝze on þe crosse as þou seyduste before; for God dyethe noȝt. [...] Why seyste þou to me so many ydulle wordis? Hit is inposible þat a man sholde aryse fro dethe to lyue. [...] But how he styede to heuene, as þou seyst, I can noȝt se it ne belyue it. (pp. 26–8)

[Badby on the words of consecration of the Eucharist as the true body of Christ:] [I]t could not sinke into his minde that the words are to be taken as they litterallie lie, vnles he should denie the incarnation of Christ. [...] Furthermore he sayd that he would beleue the omnipotent God in trinitie, and said moreouer that if euery hoste being consecrated at the aulter were the Lords body, that then there be 20000. gods in England. But he beleueed (he said) in one God omnipotent. [...] He also said] that he would greatly maruell: that if anie man had a loafe of bread, and should breake the same and giue to euery man a mouthfull, that the same loafe should afterwards be whole.³⁶

³⁴ Norman Daniel, *Heroes and Saracens: An Interpretation of the Chansons de Geste* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1984), p. 209. On the penchant of Christian thinkers in the high middle ages to see Saracens as heretics, see John Victor Tolan, *Saracens: Islam in the Medieval European Imagination* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002), pp. 135–69.

³⁵ For the role of 'open resoun' in Lollard and anti-Lollard polemics, as well as the role of reason in Wyclif's thought, see Kantik Ghosh, *The Wycliffite Heresy: Authority and the Interpretation of Texts* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002).

³⁶ John Foxe, *Acts and Monuments*, 2 vols (London: John Daye, 1583), I, p. 521. The account of Badby's trial that Foxe is translating is found in Wilkins, *Concilia*, III, pp. 325–8, esp. p. 327. For Badby's rationalist cast of mind, see Peter McNiven, *Heresy and Politics in the Reign of Henry IV: The Burning of John Badby* (Woodbridge: Boydell, 1987), pp. 199–201.

The Exploitations of Medieval Romance

[Hoccleve on Badby:]
Schal he rebelle ageyn his lordes myght,
Which þat þis wyde world haþ made of noght,
For reson may not knytte it in his thoght?

Was it not eek a moustre as in nature
þat god I-bore was of a virgine?
3it is it soþ, þogh man be coniecture
Of reson, or what he can ymagine,
Not sauoure it, ne can it determyne.³⁷

Although Badby had not questioned God's creative power or the Virgin birth in his trial, Hoccleve links Badby's common-sense criticisms of the Eucharistic miracle to the same kind of rationalist rejection of supra-rational acts of God that runs through Ferakutte's challenges to the Apostles' Creed. Ferakutte shares with the imagined figure of the Lollard not only his rationalist affinities but also the presumed Lollard proclivity for questioning and debating the articles of the faith. Archbishop Arundel certainly regarded questioning as symptomatic of heretical inclination, and this attitude is echoed in a Lollard pastiche by Hoccleve:

'Why stant this word heere?' and 'why this word there?'
'Why spake god thus and seith thus elles where?'
'Why dide he this wyse and mighte han do thus?'
Our fadres medled no thyng of swich gere:
þat oghte been a good mirour to vs.³⁸

We have already noted that Wyclif and his followers were identified with Mohammed by chroniclers, and a final link between the Saracen Ferakutte and English heretics was forged by another such rhetorical connection, this time between the biblical giant Goliath and heresy. Made commonplace by twelfth-century rhetoric dealing with Eucharistic heresies, this image of a fearsome giant – whose grotesque body and indomitable physical strength provided a potent symbol of the perversion and terrifying power of heresy – resurfaced in anti-Lollard polemics of the mid-fifteenth century.³⁹ In *Turpines Story*, Ferakutte is twice referred to as 'a gyaunte of the kynrade of Golias', Roland once as a 'Dauyd' (pp. 23, 24). The translator also adds several phrases that echo elements of the biblical narrative of 1 Samuel 17, thus reinforcing the association between the two events and

³⁷ Thomas Hoccleve, *Hoccleve's Works: The Regement of Princes, A.D. 1411–12*, ed. by Frederick J. Furnivall, EETS, ES 72 (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trübner, 1897; repr. Woodbridge: Boydell, 1997), lines 341–8.

³⁸ *To Sir John Oldcastle, A.D. 1415*, in *Hoccleve's Works: The Minor Poems*, ed. by Frederick J. Furnivall and I. Gollancz, EETS, ES 61 (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trübner, 1892), lines 156–60.

³⁹ As Mishtooni Bose has noted in passing, the image of a giant was picked up in Thomas Netter's anti-Wycliffite polemic, with Netter referring to himself as a David combating the Goliath Wyclif; see *Doctrinale Antiquitatum Fidei Catholicae Ecclesiae*, ed. by Fr. Bonaventura Blanciotti, 3 vols (Venice, 1757–9; repr. Farnborough: Gregg, 1967), I, pp. 7, 808; Bose, 'Vernacular Philosophy and the Making of Orthodoxy in the Fifteenth Century', *New Medieval Literatures*, 7 (2005), 73–99 (pp. 83–4).

the significance of victory over the giant as a vindication of the Christian faith.⁴⁰ This particular Saracen – a rationalist, heretical giant publicly questioning and debating the articles of the faith – reads very much like the stereotypes of the late-medieval English heretic who, once identified as such, also shared with Ferakutte the same prospects: conversion or death.

Conversion is a familiar topos of Charlemagne romances; a reader repeatedly finds Christians and Saracens calling upon each other to convert and believe this, that, or the other, often adding inducements like beautiful and rich wives, powerful friends, lands, and rescue from imminent death. The conversion-under-pressure motif is so common, and Roland so often at its centre, that its conflation of power with belief even receives satirical treatment at the end of *The Taill of Rauf Coilyear*.⁴¹ We too may be tempted to mock the transparent disingenuousness of these so-called ‘conversions’, but Middle English Charlemagne romances do not accept such highly incentivized ‘Christianizations’ uncritically. The entire plot of the *Sege off Melayne*, for example, is driven by crises of forced conversions, beginning with the Duke of Melayne praying to Christ about whether he ought to become a pagan to save his city and his family.⁴² Floripas in the *Firumbras* romances of the fifteenth century always wavers in her commitment to be christened until Roland and the other knights dramatically expose her idols as powerless by smashing them to bits.⁴³ Firumbras and Otuel both reject the blandishments offered by Oliver and Roland on multiple occasions, and it is only a miraculous illumination by the Holy Ghost that changes their minds.⁴⁴ Even the deceptive machinations of the arch-traitor Ganelon in *Turpines Story*, *Otuel and Roland*, *Charles the Grete*, and the Middle English *Song of Roland* fragment turn upon his false claim that he has converted to Christianity and catechized Charles’s Saracen antagonists, a claim which initiates Charles’s return to France with Roland

⁴⁰ According to Shepherd, *Turpines Story* uniquely repeats the link to Goliath (p. 71, note to lines 748–9). In 1 Samuel, David begins the battle with ‘I come to you in the name of the LORD of hosts’ (17:45), a phrase repeated by an interpolation in *Turpines Story*, ‘Pan in þe name of God Rowlonde went to þis giant’ [interpolation italicized] (p. 24). The two other interpolations include Roland’s ‘God was strengre þan man’ (p. 24) echoing David’s ‘the battle is the LORD’s and He will give you into our hands’ (17:47) and Roland’s ‘for þe feyth of God and for þe defence þerof’ (p. 24) paralleling David’s proclamation that he fights so ‘that all the earth may know that there is a God in Israel’ (17:46).

⁴¹ Roland’s advice to convert is initially rejected with scorn by the Saracen knight, Magog. Roland’s second shot adds royal patronage and a beautiful wife to the deal. This time Magog disdains the offer of the goods as a bad reason to change faiths, but says that he has decided to convert anyway because he has become convinced of the Christian God’s superior might (*The Taill of Rauf Coilyear*, lines 871–949). The whole dialogue is clearly parodic.

⁴² ‘*The Sege off Melayne*’ and ‘*The Romance of Duke Rowland and Sir Otuell of Spayne*’ [...] together with a fragment of ‘*The Song of Roland*’, ed. by Sidney J. H. Herrtage, EETS, ES 35 (London: Trübner, 1880), lines 37–108.

⁴³ *Charles the Grete*, p. 126; ‘*Firumbras*’ and ‘*Otuel and Roland*’, ed. by Mary Isabelle O’Sullivan, EETS, OS 198 (London: Oxford University Press, 1935), lines 233–84.

⁴⁴ *Charles the Grete*, pp. 52–78; *Otuel and Roland*, lines 503–625; *Duke Rowland*, lines 508–85. In another episode in *Otuel and Roland*, the Saracen king Garcy destroys his idols in the fire when he realizes they have been powerless to help him defeat the Christians; upon his subsequent military defeat, he converts in great distress (lines 1529–685).

in the rearguard.⁴⁵ Conquered foes do not necessarily convert successfully, as shown by the example of the defeated sultan Balant, who, after promising to convert, uses his own baptismal font as a spittoon and a weapon.⁴⁶ The situation of a forced or incentivized conversion is a staple of the genre, but genuine converts are nearly always convinced of Christianity's superiority or truth, either by Christians or miraculously by God Himself. In contrast, conversions motivated solely by combat or politics are frequently portrayed as dangerous, and often deadly.

Conversion is particularly underscored in *Turpines Story* by a narrative frame that is defined by the project of converting Galicia. This project, as the first chapter relates, began with St James the apostle, who 'conuerted þe Galiciance' and inspired his disciples to do the same (p. 5). The conflict which initiates the action of *Turpines Story* is the Galicians' apostasy, for 'sone after þe disipul of Seynt Iame were gone þens, the Galiciance were peruertide and forsoke þe feyth' (p. 5). In a vision, St James gives Charlemagne the task of reconverting those who have been 'peruertide', essentially redoing the converting work of St James. The narrative frame is completed when Charles arrives in Compostela, St James's burial site, at that time 'vnknown amonge þe cruelle mysbeleuyng Sarzyns' (p. 6). Charles's first move in Compostela is to finish off his converting project by rewarding the Christians he finds, but 'þo þat he founde þat were peruertide renegatis, sume he slew and sume he put to exile into Fraunce' (p. 31).

Charles also establishes an 'Apostelus See' at Compostela, and the bishop of Compostela is characterized by the translator as a sort of guarantee against a second relapse of the formerly Saracen (and in turn formerly Christian) Galicians: 'yf so be þat þe feyth of Criste, by *eny heresy ore erreure*, began to be hurte ore fayle in eny cittee ore toune in Spayne, hit sholde be examynyde and reconsiled by the bushope of Compostle' [interpolation italicized] (p. 32). Here, the translator has added 'heresy' to what the newly ordained bishop is to guard against.⁴⁷ This is but one example of how, in comparison with other Middle English versions of *The Pseudo-Turpin Chronicle*, it is *Turpines Story* that most strongly emphasizes that the reconversion of apostates defines Charles's mission. The translator's word choices and interpolations encourage the reader to think of the Galicians as not just pagans but heretics, renegades who have forsaken their faith for paganism. Where *The Pseudo-Turpin Chronicle* speaks of Saracens simply as pagans or enemies of God, *Turpines Story* very often chooses words which push the characterization towards apostasy, calling Saracens 'mysbeleuyng', 'false', or 'peruertide renegatis' who 'forsoke þe feyth' (pp. 5–6, 8, 18–19, 31). *Turpines Story* also records the claim that St James converted *all* the Galicians, a hyperbole not shared by other

⁴⁵ *Turpines Story*, pp. 34–5; *Otuel and Roland*, lines 2035–40; *Charles the Grete*, pp. 230–2; and *Song of Roland*, ed. Herrtage, lines 15–44.

⁴⁶ *Charles the Grete*, pp. 194–7; Balant's conversion also goes terribly awry in *Firumbras*, lines 1451–1724. There is also the example of the twice-defeated Aigelond in *Turpines Story*, pp. 19–21, and *Charles the Grete*, pp. 216–18. Aigelond is persuaded to convert by the trial by battle, but later reneges due to righteous indignation at a moral failing on Charles's part.

⁴⁷ According to Shepherd, 'eny heresy ore erreure' substitutes for 'peccatis popularum exigentibus' in the versions of *The Pseudo-Turpin Chronicle* printed by Meredith Jones (p. 80, note to lines 1024–5).

versions of *The Pseudo-Turpin Chronicle*. The translator's insistence here even runs contrary to his later assertion that James's disciples finished the job later.⁴⁸ By presenting Galicia as having been originally Christian, the translator reinforces the idea that *all* of Galicia is in heresy and in need of correction. The cumulative effect of these changes is that the reader comes to regard the Galicians as renegades and perverted heretics who have turned their backs on the Christian faith.

At the centre of this narrative arc of reconversion are two parallel chapters: 'How Charles and Aigelonde disputed þeire righte of Spaigne' and 'The bataille of Ferekot and the disputacion of good Rowlande'. Both of these disputes are framed by battles, both begin with interpolations noting issues of language, both use religious language to articulate the nature of the dispute, both ultimately fail to convert powerful Saracens, and both conclude with almost identical wording which defines how the battle is to decide the truth of the religious claims.⁴⁹ In the first dispute, Charles accuses Aigelond of having perverted Charles's new (re-)converts, making them 'renegatis and false paynims'; Aigelond counters that Charles has forced inferior beliefs on Saracens without any corresponding right to the land. Charles replies that Christianity is the superior faith, and attempts to establish that its superiority is what defines his own right to Spain. This dispute between the two kings over both land and converts is then doubled and intensified by the disputation between the chief lieutenants of both sides, Roland and Ferakutte. As with the first dispute between the two commanders, the translator of *Turpines Story* makes it clear from the start that Roland is fighting to defend the faith:

Wan Rowlonde saw þis, prince of Charlis hooste, þat none in alle þe hooste durste go to þis gyaunte, he commyttid him hoely to God with fulle truste in God; he came to his vnkulle Charlis and *seid þat he wold fyztte with thicke Ferakutte, for, he seid, God was strengre þan man – 'And for þe feythe of God and for þe defence þerof, I wolle asaye him.'* [...] Pan in þe name of God Rowlonde went to þis giant. [interpolations italicized] (p. 24)

These interpolations make it all the more fitting that Roland's defence of Christianity in battle is doubled by a disputation in which he defends a set of Christian propositions to an aggressive, questioning giant who fights to maintain the Galicians in a state of heresy.

The debate between Roland and Ferakutte is the climax of *Turpines Story's* interests in conversion and the possibility of apostasy. The *dénouement* of this narrative arc follows two chapters later as Charles sets up the apostolic see in Compostela in

⁴⁸ This exaggeration and the contradiction it entails were spotted by Shepherd in his edition (p. 41, note to line 87).

⁴⁹ Aigelond to Charles: 'vndure þis forme I shalle fyztte with þe and þyne: I for my law3e and my feithe and þou for þi law3e and þi feithe, and whoso hathe þe felde and þe victorie, is law3e is beste. He shalle haue loude and preysinge, and þat parte þat is ouercome, euerlastynge shame and repreue' (pp. 19–20). Ferakutte's terms are very similar: 'I shalle fyztte with þe, þat yf þis feithe þat þow spekiste of be trew þou shalte ouercome me; and if it be no3t trew I shalle ouercome þe; and he þat his overcome shalle be in repreue, and he þat ouercome oþer shalle be in loude and presyngre' (p. 29).

part as a remedy for heresy. In a text that has consistently emphasized the heretical status of Saracens, this question-and-answer exchange could have reminded readers of contemporary exchanges between ecclesiastical authorities and those suspected of heresy. The sensitivity that Middle English Charlemagne romances have to the relationship between truth, power and religious discourse when converting Saracens becomes both more conspicuous and more acute in a fifteenth-century reading of *Turpin's Story*. The conversion of misbelievers to the true faith was a pressing public concern, and consequently this heretical giant in a vernacular theological disputation is capable of prompting questions of 'immediate topicality' beyond his interrogation of the Creed: can such a 'free-thinking rationalist' be converted through theological debate, especially a debate that shades into scholastic play?⁵⁰ Failing to convert Saracens has on the one hand a clear and rather predictable implication for Ferakutte's heretical *confrères* as well as those attempting to turn them to orthodoxy through dialogue or through inquisition: even when the debate is won, the result is not necessarily a turn towards the faith. How far such scepticism about turning a grotesque Saracen giant to Christianity would have actually translated into a cynicism about turning one's neighbours to the faith is difficult to determine. On the other hand, what is fascinating here is that since Roland and Ferakutte's debate is not directly about hot contemporary issues – no church disendowment or transubstantiation here – but about the Apostles' Creed common to orthodox and heterodox alike, the roles in this debate can easily be exploited by either side.⁵¹ Ferakutte is always the heretic, of course, but he need not always be a Lollard to every reader. Reading him as such depends on how much one has embraced the exaggerated, polemical image of the argumentative and stubbornly rationalist 'Lollere' promoted by the ecclesiastical establishment

⁵⁰ C. Meredith Jones's survey of the Saracen in Charlemagne romance, 'The Conventional Saracen of the Songs of Geste', *Speculum*, 17 (1942), 201–25, concludes that 'Conversion was never regarded by either side, in fact or in fiction, as the result of faith, of reflexion, or of instruction. It never occurred to these medieval minds that the articles of belief might have in themselves a force sufficiently compelling to convince the heathen. Something more was always necessary' (p. 223). However, this generalization about both romance and history does not stand up to scrutiny. If debate was expected to fail, why was it deployed so often in polemics, both against Jews and Muslims as well as against heretics? One example of this has been noted by Bose, who points out in 'Reginald Pecock's Vernacular Voice', in *Lollards and Their Influence in Late Medieval England*, ed. by Fiona Somerset, Jill C. Havens and Derrick G. Pitard (Woodbridge: Boydell, 2003), pp. 217–36, that '[Pecock] shared with both Netter and the writers of the Lollard dialogues an imaginative awareness of the potential, and even the necessity, of the [dialogue] form as an active means of intervention in social, ecclesiastical and doctrinal disputes' (p. 228). For the 'crisis of conversion' after 1400, see John van Engen, 'Conversion and Conformity in the Early Fifteenth Century', in *Conversion: Old Worlds and New*, ed. by Kenneth Mills and Anthony Grafton (Rochester, NY: University of Rochester Press, 2003), pp. 30–65.

⁵¹ Nothing Roland asserts would have contradicted the beliefs imputed to Lollards at the time. As only the tenets of the Apostles' Creed dealing with Christ's identity are discussed, Roland never makes it to affirming or denying the crucial point: the precise meaning of the statement, 'I believe in the holy catholic church.' It is this point that exercises William Thorpe so much – and reveals his heterodoxy most strongly – in his own *credo* before Archbishop Arundel, also loosely structured by the Apostles' Creed; see 'The Testimony of William Thorpe 1407', in *Two Wycliffite Texts*, ed. by Anne Hudson, EETS, OS 301 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), pp. 24–93 (p. 32).

and its apologists. Heterodox dissenters also selectively exploited anti-rationalist and anti-scholastic rhetoric, whether to justify lay readings of the Holy Scriptures as being ‘above reason’ or to denigrate the privileges and denounce as ‘sophistry’ the reasoning of their university-trained antagonists.⁵² Lollards and other religious dissenters, no less than the orthodox, could and perhaps did claim the identity of David as a vulnerable underdog who is confident that God will vindicate him and cause the enemy to be vanquished.⁵³ Like biblical texts, romances were also available for exploitation by heterodox readers: since Lollards saw their antagonists as the true heretics, they could take on the role of a Roland, masterfully defending a set of truly Christian propositions to a corrupt and therefore ‘heretical’ ecclesiastical hierarchy, monstrously bloated by its own wealth and worldly power.

Turpines Story was available to both Lollard and anti-Lollard readings since Lollards and the orthodox were in conflict precisely because they were concerned about the same issues and because asking and answering questions was the method employed from *both* positions to bring those in error back to the faith. We miss these affinities and over-simplify exchange if we read only in terms of catechesis and didacticism. Displacing catechesis as the primary heuristic reveals instead how the debate between Roland and Ferakutte has been set up by the translator to be a defining episode in *Turpines Story*, bringing together timely concerns about reconversion and heresy in a scholastic disputation framed by a deadly battle. Of course, a fifteenth-century reader may very well have been reminded by this text of the Apostles’ Creed and some quite commonplace arguments defending the Trinity, the virgin birth, the incarnation, and the suffering and death of a god. However, what I am suggesting is that such a reader could have relished the scholastic contest of the disputants and their witticisms, could have been subtly tutored in anti-rationalist argumentative technique, could have cheered on the confounding of a ‘heretical’ threat – however defined – while also being nurtured in a scepticism about the ability of disputation or even inquisition to change a heretic’s mind.

⁵² See note 35 above; on attitudes to sophistry in England, see also Rita Copeland, ‘Sophistic, Spectrality, Iconoclasm’, in *Images, Idolatry, and Iconoclasm in Late Medieval England: Textuality and Visual Image*, ed. by Jeremy Dimmick, James Simpson and Nicolette Zeeman (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), pp. 112–30.

⁵³ Pecock, for example, imagines a Lollard interlocutor casting himself as a David to Pecock’s Goliath, thus demonstrating that the ecclesiastical hierarchy did not have exclusive rights to identify heretical giants; see *The Repressor of Over Much Blaming of the Clergy*, ed. by Churchill Babington, Rolls Series 19, 2 vols (London: Longman, 1860; repr. Wiesbaden: Kraus, 1966), I, p. 71; Bose, ‘Vernacular Philosophy’, pp. 83–4.

Subtle Crafts: Magic and Exploitation in Medieval English Romance

Corinne Saunders

Magic in romance is most obviously related to the exotic and the marvellous, the expectation of the surprising and the strange. Magical adventure and encounter with those who possess supernatural powers are essential building blocks of romance narratives. These motifs endure in modern and post-modern forms of romance, powerfully present, for instance, in the adventures of Harry Potter, or the fantasy worlds created by Tolkien and Philip Pullman.¹ Part of the enduring appeal of magic, however, is that it also goes beyond the exotic: its effects are both wonderful and fearful. The topos offers the potential for endless exploitation, and is at the same time intimately connected with the subject of exploitation: magical knowledge offers secret, unfair or unpredictable power over others, and is often both manipulative and dangerous. This essay will consider the exploitations of magic in Middle English romance, and the ways these interweave with the idea of magic *as* exploitation. Magic allows for the exploitation of the individual by lovers, rivals or opponents, and hence the shaping of narratives of adventure, challenge and test. The motif of exploitation through supernatural means opens up questions of intention and morality, and can also lead to the transgression of typical gender roles. Magic colours and complicates romance for it is morally ambiguous: romance writers probe the status of occult learning, and the dangers as well as the attractions of illicit, potentially harmful or transformative knowledge. The possessors of such powers may themselves belong to the otherworld, and their exploitation of the human becomes a kind of game-playing. Romance repeatedly exploits the blurring between the otherworldly and the human in its depictions of those who practise magic.²

Romance writers drew on diverse, complex and sometimes conflicting ideas of magic and the supernatural, the roots of which stretched back through classical and Judaeo-Christian as well as Germanic and Celtic belief and ritual.³

¹ For a consideration of the development of the romance genre from its origins to the present, see *A Companion to Romance: From Classical to Contemporary*, ed. by Corinne Saunders (Oxford: Blackwell, 2004).

² Michelle Sweeney, in *Magic in Medieval Romance from Chrétien de Troyes to Geoffrey Chaucer* (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2000), offers a study of the social and spiritual resonances of magic in romance. See also two wide-ranging collections of essays on magic in French literature, *Le Merveilleux et la magie dans la littérature*, ed. by Gerard Chandès, CERMEIL 2 (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1992), and *Magie et illusion au moyen âge*, Sénéfiance 42 (Aix-en-Provence: CUER MA, 1999).

³ Important studies of the history of magic include Richard Kieckhefer, *Magic in the Middle Ages* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989; repr. 2000); Valerie I. J. Flint, *The Rise of Magic in*

Classical writing depicted a world of gods and daimons, spirits who inhabited the air between Hades and the moon, and could act for good or ill, as well as celebrated practitioners of magic such as Medea and Circe. The magic arts were said to have come from the East, from Persia: Pliny traces magic to Zoroaster and his priests or 'magi' (Greek *magus*, *magoi*), and tells how Xerxes brought this 'monstrous art' to Greece.⁴ The word *magos*, meaning a Persian or Median priest, came to imply 'illicit or alien' and the 'foreign' played a crucial role in the definition of magic. Gradually, from the Hellenistic period onwards, an independent sense of magic (*mageia*) developed, probably combining, from Greek folk-belief, mystery cults and exotic Eastern religions, fragments of practice such as the use of images, amulets or potions to protect or harm, and rituals of divination and healing. Such magic was often described by the firmly negative term *goeteia*, implying illicit, fraudulent or demonic magic. Yet its basic premise of encountering the supernatural was formative in classical thought: neo-Platonists such as Plotinus argued that man could access the divine, harness the natural correspondences and forces of the universe, and perfect the self, while the 'theurgists' developed complex rituals in order to summon the gods. There was also a strong tradition of what would come to be termed natural magic: Pliny's *Natural History* repeatedly and ferociously condemns magic, 'the lies of the Magi', as dependent on the powers of demons, but also elaborates in detail the extraordinary attributes of plants, stones and animal substances. The oppositions between secular and spiritual, natural and demonic, licit and illicit magic established within the classical period remained crucial.

In the early Christian world magic was associated with the pagan and the heretical, as Origen's *Contra Celsus* argues. All aspects of magic, such as divination, amulets and medical charms, were interpreted as the work of demons. Augustine states categorically in *De civitate Dei* that magic is demonic and is to be contrasted with miracles, which occur through faith. He condemns the Platonic distinction between 'theurgy' and black magic or *goeteia*.⁵ Yet, like Pliny, Augustine readily accepts as part of God's universe the marvellous in nature: the properties of plants and stones, or the incorruptible nature of the peacock's flesh. Theologians

Early Medieval Europe (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991); Karen Jolly, Catharina Raudvere and Edward Peters, *Witchcraft and Magic in Europe: The Middle Ages* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2001); and Keith Thomas, *Religion and the Decline of Magic: Studies in Popular Beliefs in Sixteenth and Seventeenth Century England*, 2nd edn (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1977). I am grateful to Elizabeth Archibald and Ad Putter for permission to draw for my historical discussion here, as in my treatment of *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* below, on some of the material used in my essay 'Religion and Magic', in *The Cambridge Companion to the Arthurian Legend* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009). I am also grateful to Juan Camilo Conde Silvestre and M^a Nila Vázquez González for permission to draw for this discussion, and that of Chaucer below, on my essay, 'Beyond Nature: Magic, Science and the Supernatural in Chaucer's Writing', in *Medieval English Literary and Cultural Studies*, SELIM 15 (Murcia: University of Murcia, 2004), pp. 121–43.

⁴ See further Pliny, *Historia Naturalis*, book XXX, trans. by John F. Healy, *Natural History: A Selection* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1991), pp. 268–71.

⁵ See St Augustine, *City of God III: Books VIII–XI*, trans. by David S. Wiesen, Loeb Classical Library (London: William Heinemann; Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1968), X.ix, pp. 286–7.

of the early Middle Ages followed Augustine, identifying pagan superstition as demonic and heretical, although its survival is clearly indicated by the many references to practices such as the use of amulets, love-magic, medical magic and divination in secular and canon laws, penitentials and sermons, as well as the existence of collections of charms and remedies such as the Old English *Lacnunga* or *Leechbooks*. Isidore of Seville follows Augustine in attributing magic to 'the craft of demons', but his extensive discussion of kinds of magic, more developed than Augustine's, indicates that the practice of magic is continuing, even developing.⁶

The rise of the universities and new interest in natural philosophy, however, occasioned a shift in attitudes to magic from the thirteenth century onwards. As Arabic works, including treatises on astrology and alchemy, were translated into Latin, the idea of natural magic gained in force. The concept of the universe as a single organism, governed by a sophisticated set of correspondences, underpinned the idea that natural powers could be harnessed – powers emanating from the stars and planets but contained, for instance, in plants or stones. A crucial distinction was made between the study of the cosmos, which might lead to an understanding of destiny, and the desire to exploit magical knowledge in order to alter destiny. Philosophers such as William of Auvergne and Albertus Magnus accepted the occult sciences, Aquinas gave credence to astrology and Roger Bacon likewise believed in the occult forces of nature. Chaucer's Physician practises 'magyk natureel' in his knowledge of how the stars cause maladies and humours, and in his conversance with drugs and medicines.⁷ Other magical arts, however, were viewed with much suspicion, as potentially dependent on demons. Chaucer's *Parson's Tale* follows theological and legal discourse in condemning enchantment and necromancy, associating them with falseness, swearing and conjuring spirits, and heresy:

But let us go now to thilke horrible sweryng of adjuracioun and conjuracioun, as doon thise false enchauntours or nigromanciens in bacyns ful of water, or in a bright swerd, in a cercele, or in a fir, or in a shulderboon of a sheep./ I kan nat seye but that they doon cursedly and dampnably agayns Crist and al the feith of hooly chirche. (602–3)

Yet the boundaries are often more blurred than the distinction between natural and demonic magic suggests. Romance writers do not always present enchantment or necromancy as wholly different in kind from natural magic, but rather as going further and perhaps more dangerously into the occult arts. The use of illusion, in particular, is a prominent motif, and often signals practitioners whose actions are viewed with some ambivalence, and who are potentially though not

⁶ See Isidore of Seville, *Etimologiás* [*Etymologiae*], ed. by Jose Oroz Reta and Manuel-A. Marcos Casquero, 2 vols (Madrid: Biblioteca de Autores Cristianos, 1982–3), I, viii.ix, p. 716; trans. by Stephen A. Barney et al., *The Etymologies* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), pp. 181–3.

⁷ Geoffrey Chaucer, General Prologue to *The Canterbury Tales*, in *The Riverside Chaucer*, general editor Larry D. Benson (Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin, 1987), p. 30, line 416. All subsequent references to Chaucer's works will be to this edition, and are cited by line number.

certainly villainous. Necromancy may also include the powers of invisibility, metamorphosis or shape-shifting, and manipulation of mind or body for the purpose of obtaining love or power. The term seems to imply active magical arts beyond possession of a magical object such as a ring, or special skills in healing or medicine. Helen Cooper writes: 'Middle English "nigromancy" is much less pejorative a term than the modern "necromancy": it is magic on the edge of acceptability, not magic conducted through the agency of the dead.'⁸ 'Nigromancy' and 'sorcery' often appear as near-similes, sometimes along with 'witchcraft', and it is the false etymology of black or dark indicated by the form 'nigromancy' that is most pervasive. Schooling in the occult sciences might include study of necromancy, especially the arts of illusion, as well as natural magic. The notion of magic is further complicated, particularly in romance, by the idea of an otherworld of faery, whose inhabitants are neither demonic nor divine, but possess marked supernatural powers, and which provides an explanatory context for magical objects, practitioners of magic or strange adventures. Human magic may be difficult to disentangle from otherworldly forces. Romance writers both blur and probe the distinctions between natural magic, 'nigromancy' and the otherworldly, exploiting the uneasy power and complex cultural history of ideas of the supernatural.

Chaucer's *Franklin's Tale* explores the dramatic and destructive potential even of explicitly natural magic: this provides the squire Aurelius with the means to exploit the promise of his beloved Dorigen that she will never love him until the coast of Brittany is clear of 'the grisly feendly rokkes blake' (868), which for her represent the incomprehensible and immutable powers of destruction present in the world. Aurelius' immediate response to her words is to pray that a miracle remove the rocks, but human rather than divine intervention becomes the focus, when on hearing Aurelius' lament, his brother has the idea of employing magic to create an illusion of a theatrical kind: 'ther be sciences / By whiche men make diverse apparences, / Swiche as thise subtile tregetoures pleye' (1139-41). He envisages the manipulation of 'thise moones mansions [...] Or oother magyk natureel above' (1154-5), the exploitation of astrological or natural powers to create the effect of a tide that covers the black rocks. Such powers, like Prospero's in *The Tempest*, are rooted in occult learning: Aurelius' brother remembers the book 'of magyk natureel' (1124) that he saw on his companion's desk in Orléans, with its discussion of 'the operaciouns / Touchynge the eighte and twenty mansiouns / That longen to the moone' (1129-30). The technical language suggests that the book is a learned treatise such as those from the Arabic tradition attributed to Hermes Trismegistus. The magical 'operacioun' (1290), a technical term, will involve much consultation of the stars, and application of specialized knowledge. This natural magic of Orléans is firmly distinguished from demonic practices, although the Franklin remains suspicious of it, 'For holy chirches feith in oure bileve, / Ne suffreth noon

⁸ Helen Cooper, *The English Romance in Time: Transforming Motifs from Geoffrey of Monmouth to the Death of Shakespeare* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), p. 161; and see more generally Cooper's intelligent discussion of magic in romance, pp. 137-72.

illusioun us to greve' (1133–4); Chaucer with his treatise on the astrolabe and interest in the occult sciences seems to have been more sympathetic.

The clerk's foreknowledge of the coming of Aurelius and his brother indicates his skill in the magical arts, a skill further demonstrated by his theatrical spectacles of forests, parks, hunting and dancing. His arts are most extensively displayed later in his astrological computations, which produce the effect that the rocks 'for a wyke or tweye, / [...] semed [...] aweye' (1295–6). That this is an illusion, 'an apparence or jogelrye' (1265), as the Franklin terms it, is important: the clerk's powers are limited, not involving 'nigromancie' of the kind that is forbidden in the *Parson's Tale*, but rather the exploitation of natural forces. Chaucer revels in the detailed evocation of this natural magic, but, as so often, also exploits sudden shifts of tone, for no one ever goes to see whether the rocks really are 'aweye' and, instead, the focus of the story shifts to the complex emotional predicaments of Dorigen and Arveragus, moving from appearances to reality, from the rocks outside to troubled questions of the 'trouthe' within. The story is founded, however, on the exploitation of perception through magic: the rocks, which have seemed eternal, a symbol of the possibility of death and destruction in the temporal world, become transient. Natural magic is proven more dangerous than it might seem, for illusion undermines the solid foundation of the *trouthe* Dorigen has sworn: suddenly she appears to belong to another man, and the disappearance of the rocks seems to authorize her rape. The power of the natural world proves to be exploitable, and the rocks come to seem no more than a shadow in contrast to the gods by which Dorigen perhaps should have sworn. Ultimately, magic, the ambiguous art of illusion, reveals truth, and leads to grace: the story ends positively in Aurelius' pity and release of Dorigen, and the clerk's subsequent forgiveness of Aurelius. The clerk stands at the very edge of acceptability: his power to shape illusions is explicitly natural; he does not summon demons. But although he is finally motivated by generosity, his illusions have been exploitative, intended to intervene in destiny, rendering the impossible condition of Dorigen's promise possible in order to force her to yield to Aurelius. The story points to the dangers of knowledge of the cosmos and of the art of illusion, and the possibilities the magical arts offer for control of a profound, affective kind over the minds and bodies of others.

Chaucer's *Franklin's Tale* is highly intellectual, reflecting and playing with the author's own learning and knowledge of ideas concerning the occult sciences. Less consciously intellectual romances, however, engage with many of the same notions in their treatment of magic. Particularly striking is *Partonope of Blois* (extant in two fifteenth-century versions, both finding their origins in versions of the late twelfth-century French *Partonopeus de Blois*), in which the arts of 'nigromancy' allow the lady Melior to obtain her beloved, but also raise complicated questions about female power.⁹ This romance offers a strikingly positive treatment

⁹ Here as in the following discussions, the detailed relation between French and English texts is too large a subject to be addressed; while all the works considered have French sources and analogues, this essay will focus on the nuances of Middle English writing. See further *Partonopeus in Europe: An Old French Romance and its Adaptations*, ed. by Catherine Hanley, Mario Longtin and Penny Eley,

of the human practitioner of nigromancy, substantiating Cooper's argument that such arts are not necessarily condemned as black magic. *Partonope* employs the familiar motif of the otherworldly hunt, used, for instance, by Marie de France in the *lai* of *Guigemar*, and Melior at first appears to be a creature of faery.¹⁰ Lost in the forest in pursuit of a great boar, Partonope enters a mysterious ship, which he identifies as 'a Shyppe of ffayre / Or thyng made be Enchauntemente' (744–5) and which carries him to what seems an enchanted country constructed through 'nygromansy' (876), where he finds an opulent castle, feast and bedchamber.¹¹ When the 'yonge mayde' (1193) Melior joins Partonope in the bed, the narrator reveals that she has brought him there 'for alle here delyte / And alle here ple-saunce was hym to haue / To here husbande' (1221–3). Melior's fear of being judged harshly is set against Partonope's anxiety that all may be a demonic illusion, and the love of the pair unfolds in a comic but troubling play of unwillingness. The narrator emphasizes Melior's shame and silence, and if she has orchestrated the meeting, it is Partonope who orchestrates the consummation. Yet the emphasis on Melior's dismay, suffering and tears suddenly shifts, and the exploited becomes the exploiter when she is revealed to be the Queen of Byzantium, who has sent her envoys in search of the best man in the world. Like the lady in *Lanval*, she has desired the knight from afar, and gone in search of him, causing 'þorow [...] crafte' the flight of the boar, Partonope's separation from the king on the hunt, and the magical ship. Her powers of enchantment are emphatically stated: 'Alle þys was made by crafte of me. / Thys crafte I dyd, yette more I can. / In alle þys tyme sawe [me] no man' (1672–4).

The narrative plays on the attractive promise of 'more' magic, yet these practices also prove dangerous as Melior puts Partonope's devotion to the test. In a sequence resembling the tale of Cupid and Psyche, Melior insists that she may only come to Partonope at night, and that he must not attempt to see her '[b]e crafte of Nygromansy' (1872); he must not exploit her kind of learning. The ambiguity of such arts is emphasized, for we are told that Melior's magical crafts are rooted in honest, Christian learning, whereas Partonope's mother fears Melior's potentially monstrous nature, identifying her as 'a þynge of ffeyre' (5072) who has

special issue of *Mediaevalia*, 25: 2 (2004). Some aspects of the following discussion of *Partonope of Blois*, *Melusine*, *Lybeaus Desconus* and *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* draw on my essay 'Erotic Magic: The Enchantress in Middle English Romance', in *The Erotic in the Literature of Medieval Britain*, ed. by Amanda Hopkins and Cory James Rushton (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2007), pp. 38–52. I am grateful to the editors for granting me their permission to use this material.

¹⁰ For a study of the motif of the hunt, see Marcelle Thiébaux, *The Stag of Love: The Chase in Medieval Literature* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1974).

¹¹ *The Middle-English Versions of 'Partonope of Blois'*, ed. by A. Trampe Böttker, EETS, ES 109 (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trübner and Oxford University Press, 1912). All subsequent references to *Partonope of Blois* are to this edition, which takes as its main text the fullest copy of the longer English version, found in London, BL, Additional MS 35288 (late fifteenth century), and will be cited by line number. For a discussion of the emphasis of the English version, see Sandra Ihle, 'The English *Partonope of Blois* as Exemplum', in *Courtly Literature: Culture and Context. Selected Papers from the 5th Triennial Congress of the International Courtly Literature Society, Dalfsen, The Netherlands, 9–16 August, 1986*, ed. by Keith Busby and Erik Kooper (Amsterdam: John Benjamins, 1990), pp. 301–11.

taken her son through 'þe deuyllys Enchauntemente' (5056). In fact, Partonope's mother employs 'fals en-chawntement' (5518), first giving Partonope a magical potion that causes him to become a 'fole naturelle' (5448) and plight his troth to the King of France's niece, and later providing him with an enchanted lantern, which cannot go out 'for wynde ne weder' (5804), and will illuminate Melior's forbidden countenance. Only at this point is her magical knowledge explained. Her father, the Emperor of Constantinople, has had her schooled in the seven arts, medicine, divinity, and finally magic: 'Then to Nygromancy sette I was, / Then I lerned Enchawntementes / To knowe þe crafte of experimentes' (5933–5). Melior's arts of illusion, however, are all effected '[b]y þe wytte þat Gode haþe sente' (5966). While she is a powerful agent of her own destiny, who exploits her knowledge of 'nigromancy' to gain her beloved, the use of magic and the test of secrecy ultimately lead to her betrayal by Partonope's mother.

Benign and malevolent magic are opposed, and the romance plays on the two aspects of the female practitioner of magic, the wish-fulfilling, faery mistress, here a guise consciously adopted by the explicitly human enchantress, and the older, false and jealous lady who uses her arts to thwart the younger generation which threatens her power – often the mother-in-law (to be) or stepmother. Eventually, after a long series of tests, the lovers of *Partonope* are reunited, but we hear no more of Melior's magical abilities: it is as if with marriage she is drawn back into the more traditional stereotype of the woman as object, to be desired and possessed. She is most of all celebrated for her beauty: 'Men seide she was an hevenly þing. / It were Impossible, thei seide, þrugh nature / Might be brought forþe suche a creature' (11,461–3). The active use of magical arts is replaced by the appearance of otherworldly beauty. *Partonope*, finally, remains deeply ambivalent on the subject of 'nigromancy' that it exploits to such dramatic narrative effect: occult arts both empower and render vulnerable its possessors, and their potential for harm is strongly realized.

The possibilities of magic are further explored in relation to the feminine arts of illusion and shape-shifting in the fourteenth-century alliterative romance *William of Palerne*, said to have been commissioned by Sir Humphrey de Bohun, and derived from the French *Guillaume de Palerne* (c. 1200). In the English version, the destructive magical arts of Alphonse's stepmother are set against the limited and benign love-magic practised by the maid-servant Alisaundrine, an opposition not found in the French original.¹² On hearing of the love-sickness of her lady (also called Melior), Alisaundrine promises healing through a certain 'grece' (636), although in fact her 'craft' (655) works to induce dreams of love in William, and the methods are left rather vague: 'Ful conyng was sche and coynt and coupe fele þinges, / of charmes and of chauntemens to schewe harde castis' (653–4). Within the narrative, Alisaundrine's natural magic is limited to power over dreams, and only employed on this occasion. While she conceives of the disguise of the lovers

¹² See G. H. V. Bunt's Introduction to his edition of *William of Palerne: An Alliterative Romance* (Groningen: Bouma's Boekhuis, 1985), pp. 33–4. All references to *William of Palerne* are to this edition, cited by line number.

as white bears, and prepares and fastens on the costumes, this is strictly presented as disguise and not magical transformation. The playful bear-suits of Melior and William contrast with the actual transformation of Alphonse into a wolf, a much more threatening form of magic.

The stepmother's exploitative use of magic is concealed for the first part of the romance, which tells how a large wolf seizes and runs off with William in the royal park; the missing opening section would have alerted the audience to the evil intentions of William's uncle, who plans to poison his brother and his infant nephew. The wolf's identity is revealed only after his care for William and human distress at the child's disappearance have been vividly depicted:

Werwolf was he non wox of kinde,
ac komen was he of kun þat kud was ful nobul;
for þe kud king of spayne was kindly his fader.
(lines 109–11)

This is not a creature of the kind depicted in Marie de France's *Bisclavret*, but a human victim of enchantment, who exemplifies the possibility of abuse of learned magic.¹³ William's plotting uncle is balanced by Alphonse's wicked stepmother, Braunde, princess of Portugal, who exploits her occult knowledge to transform the boy into a wolf. The romance contrasts malicious and generous natures in its opposition of Braunde's treachery with the werewolf's noble behaviour: 'þat witty werewolf' (2212) leads the emperor of Rome to discover the child and later cares for the lovers, his exile thus contributing to the providential pattern and to the restoration of order and right rule. Grace is ultimately rewarded by grace, for Alphonse's love of William brings about his own transformation into human shape.

Magic is characterized as forbidden, harmful learning, consciously pursued:

But lelliche þat ladi in zouþe hadde lerned miche schame,
For al þe werk of wicchecraft wel ynou3 che couþe;
nede nadde 3he namore of nigramauncy to lere.
Of coninge of wicchecraft wel ynou3 3he couþde.
(lines 117–20)

The work perhaps reflects particular unease concerning female learning, as well as the occult sciences more generally. The terms 'wicchecraft' and 'nigramauncy' directly contrast with the 'charmes' and 'chauntemens' employed by Alisaundrine (654), differentiating black from white, destructive from healing magic. Yet the concept of 'nigramauncy' is also limited, for Braunde exploits not demons but her knowledge of nature, concocting a magical ointment:

A noynement anon sche made of so grete strengþe
bi enchaunmens of charmes – þat evel chaunche hire tide! –
þat whan þat womman þerwi[þ] hadde þat worli child

¹³ For a study of the cultural resonances and origins of the werewolf motif, focused on the idea of the double, see Claude Lecouteux, *Fées, sorcières et loups-garous au moyen âge: histoire du double* (Paris: Imago, 1992), pp. 121–44.

ones anoynted, þe child wel al abowte,
he wex to a werwolf wíztly þerafter,
al þe making of man so mysse hadde 3he schaped.

(lines 136–41)

The terms are remarkably material, as Braunde uses a magical recipe and specialized rituals, 'enchaunmens of charmes', to effect the metamorphosis. As in the *Franklin's Tale* and *Partonope*, magical arts, the knowledge of the secrets of nature, afford the possibility of control, of intervention in another's destiny, but here, illusion is replaced by actual shape-shifting.

The realism with which Braunde's magic is portrayed is still more striking in the account of her restoration of Alphonse to his true form. On seeing the werewolf, the king of Spain recalls tales that his second wife, 'a ful loveli lady, lettered at þe best' (4088), had transformed his son into a wolf through 'charmes and enchantmens' (4104). If she is indeed so 'witti' in 'wicchecraft' (4131), argues William, 'sche can with hire connyng and hire queynt charmes, / make him to man a3en' (4136–7). The repeated emphasis on knowledge is sustained when, on being threatened with death by burning, Braunde agrees to 'hele' the werewolf (4254): she makes practical preparations, bringing 'al þat bihoved / to warysche with þe werwolf wel atte best' (4282–3). The process accords with the rituals set out in handbooks or collections of charms: a ring containing a stone of power is bound about the wolf's neck, a ligature of the kind often condemned in religious writing, and a spell is read from a precious book kept safely in a casket. Alphonse is revealed to be second to none but William in fairness, his nobility affirmed by his shame at being naked, while the queen is redeemed by her preparation of clothing and a warm bath for Alphonse. Her eventual pleas for forgiveness and mercy recognize the limits of human magic: 'ich forschop þe þanne / in þise wise to a werwolf and wend þe to spille; / but God wold nou3t þat þou were lorne' (4394–6). Magic is treated in deeply practical, even prosaic, terms, as material knowledge that affords power over shape or form, but it cannot ultimately transform human nature, negate nobility or hinder providence: its exploitative powers remain limited.

In the fourteenth-century *Lybeaus Desconus* (attributed to Thomas Chestre), the exploitative power of magic is explored in relation to both human and otherworldly practitioners, as the mysterious snare of the faery mistress is set against the cruel arts of human magicians. The eponymous hero must defeat two giants, one red, one black, in order to rescue a maiden; then fight his way into the mysterious Ile de Ore, inhabited by the Dame d'Amour, the powerful enchantress who keeps Lybeaus from his lady, persuading him through her beauty and her arts of minstrelsy and melody that he is '[j]n paradys alyue'.¹⁴ Her arts are explicitly otherworldly, 'Wyth fantasme and fayrye' (1432), but the effect is also that of illusion: 'Þus sche blerede hys y3e' (1433). Lybeaus' clothes are taken by the Dame d'Amour and he is dressed 'yn pell' (1407), a mark of the luxury of the otherworldly castle

¹⁴ *Lybeaus Desconus*, ed. by Maldwyn Mills, EETS, OS 261 (London: Oxford University Press, 1969), Cotton MS, line 1431. All subsequent references to *Lybeaus Desconus* are to this edition, cited by line number.

but also perhaps reflecting the other self he is caused to take on there: the enchantress's love-magic distorts vision in something of the manner of the magical flower in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, so that Lybeaus lingers for a year or more, oblivious to time and his lady Elyne until she enters the castle to urge him on his quest. The enchantments of this faery mistress are set up in opposition to the necromantic arts of the two clerks who have enchanted the Lady of Synadoun. This work also explores the terrifying possibility of transformation into the form of a beast, alongside the folk-motif of the magical condition that will release the victim from the spell. Whereas the Dame d'Amour 'Kowþe moch of sorcery, / More þen oþer wycches fyfe' (1424–5), the two brothers, Yrayne and Maboun (whose names echo those of Chrétien's Evrain and Maboagrain), 'beþ men of maystrye, / Clerkes of nygremansye, / Hare artes for-to rede' (1693–5). The clerks are not otherworldly beings, but create the effect of a faery otherworld through their knowledge of the occult arts. This motif of corrupt clerical learning recurs in medieval and Renaissance writing, most famously in the Faust narrative.¹⁵ Much is made of the marvellous technology of the clerks' hall: 'A palys queynte of gynne: / Per nys knyzt ne baroun / Wyth herte harde as lyoun, / Bat þorste come þer-inne. / Hyt ys be nygremauncye / Y-makeþ of fayrye' (1701–6). The Lady's cries from the 'turmentrye' and 'vylanye' of the clerks may be heard (1714–15), but she has disappeared. The magical effects recall those of the *Franklin's Tale* and *Partonope* but are more extreme: a bright fire burns in the hall, and Lybeaus sees 'trompes, schalmuses' (1762) and nobody but 'menstrales y-clodeþ yn palle', each with a torch burning in front (1776). The air is full of the sounds of 'harpe, fydele and rote, / Orgenes and mery note [...] sytyle and sawtrye' (1777–80), which are complemented by the precious appearance of the richly painted hall, with its pillars of jasper and fine crystal, brass doors, and glass windows that '[f]lorysseþ wyth jmagerye' (1797). More sinister is the immense beating of doors and windows '[a]s hyt wer voys of þunder' (1809), and the earthquake-like effect as stones fall from the walls and the hall seems ready to split asunder.¹⁶ Yet the clerks' magic is also limited: they do not obviously use supernatural means in fighting, and when Maboun falls wounded, the narrator comments, '[þ]o halp hym naȝt hys armys, / Hys chauntement ne hys

¹⁵ The Faustian theme of the compact with the devil has a long history; it is found, for instance, in the legends of St Basil and Theophilus. In his *Gesta Regum Anglorum* (c. 1125–6) William of Malmesbury narrates the popular tale of Gerbert, an Aquitanian scholar said to have studied magic in Toledo, who became a teacher in Reims with the help of a handbook of magic stolen from his master, taught the emperor-to-be, Otto III, and finally became Pope Sylvester II, when he was supposed to have made a pact with demons. Several other popes were said to have studied at a school in Rome founded by Sylvester – Benedict IX, Gregory VI and Gregory VII. The story of Gerbert is also recounted by Walter Map, as is the related story of the knight Eudo, whose pact with the devil restores his lost wealth.

¹⁶ The stones that fall from the walls echo the adventure of the Perilous Bed originating in *Le Conte du Graal*; a number of adventures in Arthurian romances employ details such as thunder and earthquake. *Lybeaus Desconus*, ed. Mills, pp. 55–6, notes particularly the description in the *Prose Vulgate* of Bohort's adventure at the Grail Castle, which also includes a Perilous Bed (*The Vulgate Version of the Arthurian Romances*, ed. by H. O. Sommer, 8 vols (Washington: Carnegie Institution, 1909–16), V, pp. 298–302), as well as other versions of the Fair Unknown story.

charmys' (1900–1). Lybeaus kills Maboun and runs Yrayne through, although the latter disappears '[w]hyder-ward he nyste' (1971).

Again the crucial power afforded over others by magic proves to be that of shape-shifting. As Lybeaus searches, he sees emerge from a stone window in the wall a 'greet wonder':

A warm come out apace
Wyth a womannes face,
Was 3ong and noþyng eld;
Hyr body and hyr wyngys
Schynede yn all þynges,
As gold gaylyche y-gyld were.
Her taye was myche vn-mete,
Hyr pawes grymly grete.

(lines 1990–7)

On kissing and embracing Lybeaus (and thus fulfilling the condition that she must kiss Gawain or one of his kin), '[p]e warmys taye and wynge / Anon hyt fell from hyre' (2009–10), to reveal the fairest woman ever seen by Lybeaus, the Lady of Synadoun restored to her human form. As in *William of Palerne*, form rather than nature is changed, and the lady's shape-shifting '[p]oru3 kraft of chaunterye' (2058) is not so different in kind from the illusions in the *Franklin's Tale* or the pyrotechnics in the hall. Again there is no suggestion of demonic intervention, although the clerks themselves appear demonic in their use of 'sorcery' for 'tormentrye', as the Lambeth Manuscript puts it (2055–6); the precise nature of their aims is never elaborated. The emphasis is on the fact that the Lady is rescued '[o]ut of þe deueles nette' (2094), her fifteen castles restored and given, along with her person, to Lybeaus, while Yrayne is never seen again.¹⁷

These romances all treat human exploitation of magical arts to obtain power over others; such arts tend to employ shape-shifting and illusion. The romance of *Melusine* (existing in two fourteenth-century French versions and translated into English c. 1500) shares many features with these works, but its practitioner of magic is genuinely otherworldly.¹⁸ The first chapter emphasizes the folly of not believing that marvels and 'the thinges that men calle ffayrees' (i, 2) are true, simply because they are not comprehensible. This romance too is structured around the motif of *trouthe*, but here the testing of *trouthe* can itself seem a deceptive, even

¹⁷ In his Introduction (pp. 46, 56–7) Mills notes that while the Lady of Synadoun affirms that both enchanters are dead (2020–2, 2064–7), Lybeaus' continuing fear of Yrayne reflects versions of the story which contain a second combat, in which the enchanter is killed, such as the Italian *Carduino*, which depicts only one enchanter but two attacks.

¹⁸ The story of *Melusine* is told in French by Jean d'Arras in prose (c. 1382–94) and La Coudrette in verse; Jean d'Arras' work is translated into English prose c. 1500 as *Melusine*, and La Coudrette's perhaps slightly earlier as *The Romans of Partenay*. Here I use the English translation of Jean d'Arras' prose romance, ed. by A. K. Donald, *Melusine*, EETS, ES 68 (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trübner, 1895). All quotations are cited by chapter and page number. For a recent study of Jean d'Arras' *Melusine*, see Stacey L. Hahn, 'Constructive and Destructive Violence in Jean d'Arras' *Roman de Melusine*', in *Violence in Medieval Literature: A Casebook*, ed. by Albrecht Classen (London: Routledge, 2004), pp. 187–206.

exploitative, process. *Trouthe* is itself betrayed, and power shifts back and forth between faery and human. The tale is set in the context of the shape-shifting, supernatural creatures who in ancient times inhabited Poitou – goblins, ‘bonnes dames’ who play pranks on children, ‘fauntasyes’ who appear in the likeness of old women, and faeries who ‘toke somtyme the fourme & the fygure of fayre & yonge wyemen’, binding their husbands to covenants which, when kept, brought prosperity and happiness (i, 4). The romance plays on the ways that covenants between human and otherworld may echo through successive generations. Melusine’s mother is the faery Pressyne, her father the King of Albany, who is ravished by Pressyne’s marvellous beauty and song when he encounters her by a spring in the forest. Pressyne, like Melusine later, binds her husband with the condition that she must not be seen in childbed, and flees with her three daughters when he breaks his promise; Melusine, the oldest, conspires with her sisters to imprison her father in a Northumbrian mountain, but is herself condemned by her mother to be transformed once a week into a serpent. Harmony of Melusine’s divided being may only be achieved through the loving faith of a husband who obeys the condition not to see her on Saturdays, nor to speak of her deeds to others; his *trouthe* will decree whether Melusine may live her ‘cours naturell’ and ‘dey as a naturel & humayn woman’, begetting a fair line, or revert to her part-serpent form until the Day of Judgement, appearing to the inhabitants of Lusignan from time to time to signify either a new lord or the death of a descendant (i, 15). The motifs of shape-shifting and the magical condition are exploited in this romance to engage from a different perspective the questions of what it means to be human and the nature of faith.

As the punishment of her father shows early on in the romance, Melusine is far from being only a victim of her sometimes serpentine shape: she is also a powerful enchantress. The first part of the work narrates her magical orchestration of love and marriage: as in *Partonope*, the love pursuit is enacted through the device of the otherworldly boar hunt. Raimondin is led to a ‘fontayne of fayerye’, the ‘fontayne of soyf’ (v, 27), where three ladies play, and wakes to see the marvellous beauty of Melusine. Her knowledge, like Melior’s, is defended as not ‘be fauntesy or dyuels werk’ but ‘of god’, and her belief is ‘as a Catholique byleue oughte for to be’ (vi, 31). This justification allows for remarkable practice of magical arts, which may well seem exploitative: in exchange for Raimondin’s consent to marry her, Melusine promises to make him ‘the grettest lord that euer was of thy lynage, and the grettest and best lyuelod man of them all’ (vi, 31). She plays the role of faery benefactress, presenting Raimondin with two rings ‘of whiche the stones ben of grette vertue’ (vi, 33), to protect against weapons and bring victory in any battle: ‘and thus, my frend, ye may goo surely’ (vi, 33). She also assists Raimondin in gaining lands (through the use of a magical thong that encompasses a large area), provides an opulent wedding feast, at which all marvel, and finally oversees the construction of the marvellous castle of Lusignan.

The narrative follows the archetypal folk pattern of breaking a taboo: as Lanval is goaded by Guinevere to reveal his lady’s existence, so Raimondin is incited to spy on Melusine by his brother’s suggestion that she is either an adulteress or

‘a spyryte of the fayry, that on euery satirday maketh hir penaunce’ (xxxvi, 296). Piercing the door, he sees her within a great marble bath:

[V]nto her nauell, in fourme of a woman kymbyng her heere, and from the nauel downward in lyknes of a grete serpent, the tayll as grete & thykk as a barell, and so long it was that she made it to touch oftymes [...] the rouf of the chambre that was ryght hye. (xxxvii, 297)

The narrative could exploit the horror of the monstrous lamia-figure, but it does not: rather, it shifts immediately to Raimondin’s grief that he has betrayed Melusine; his long lament, ‘Farwel beaute, bounte, swetenes, amyablete’ (xxxvii, 298), recognizes his role in depriving her of her human form and wifely role. Unease concerning the supernatural is evident in the depiction of the strange features and unnatural behaviour of the children of Raimondin and Melusine. Although harmony seems to be restored and Melusine reassures Raimondin, he turns against her when their son Geffray of the Great Tooth burns his brother Froimond’s abbey with all the monks within. Geffray emulates the demonic Sir Gowther in burning a monastery, while his brother Horryble is also reminiscent of Gowther in killing two nursemaids at the age of three, by ‘byttyng of their pappes’ (xli, 311), and two squires at the age of seven; Froimond emerges as the only good son. Melusine’s response is both virtuous and pragmatic: the monks were sinful, and God works in mysterious ways; they must rebuild and endow the monastery, praying that Geffray mend his ways. She swoons at Raimondin’s reproaches to her as ‘fals serpente’, served by those who ‘obeye the comandements of the prynces of helle’ (xlii, 314–15), terms that suggest the potentially demonic association of magic. The shifting perspectives of Raimondin suggest the difficulty of gauging the motivation behind the supernatural. The problem of interpretation is focused in Melusine, whose magic achieves much for the house of Lusignan, but the ambiguity of whose own actions remains reflected in the monstrous qualities of her children.

Ultimately, Melusine becomes a victim, caught once again within her serpent shape to suffer this ‘greuouse and obscure penytence’ until doomsday. The narrative calls into question the nature of ‘the veray jugge & almighty god’ on whom Melusine calls to forgive Raimondin, but who will not change Melusine’s punishment (xlili, 317) despite Raimondin’s grief. Melusine’s magic does not allow her to escape her fate. Indeed, the supernatural quality that has empowered her also condemns her, and she herself voices the tragedy of her shifting shape: ‘I was wonnt to be called lady / & men were redy to fulfyll my commandements’; now, servantless, she is condemned to ‘horryble peynes & tourments’ but also to disdain and fear of her ‘abhomyable figure’ (xlvi, 319). The perspective remains ambiguous as all take up Raimondin’s grief; their laments recall Melusine’s almsgiving, prayers and building of churches. Melusine’s just rule is reflected in her gift to Raimondin of two magic rings, which offer protection from defeat and death in a just battle. The image of her departure combines pity and horror, as she flies off through the window, ‘transfigured lyke a serpent grete & long in xv foote of length’, uttering ‘an horrible cry & pyteous’; at Lusignan, she is heard ‘cryeng so pyteously &

lamentably, lyke the voyce of a Mermayde' (xlvi, 320–1). Melusine's maternal role is sustained in her daily return to nurse her infant sons, causing the children to grow more in a week than is usual in a month, and we are told, 'dyuers haue sith sen her in femenyn figure' (xlvi, 322).¹⁹

All eventually ends in holiness and prophecy as Geffray avenges his mother by killing the traitorous Earl, finally confessing his sins and rebuilding the abbey, and Raimondin makes a pilgrimage to Rome, becoming a hermit and dying a holy death. In a further iteration of the motifs of shape-shifting, faery generation and destruction, the work ends with the tale of the young king of Armenia, who sees depicted the story of Elynas and Pressyne in the mysterious castle of a faery lady, another Melior, who proves to be his aunt, tells him the story of Lusignan, and warns of the destruction of the king's own line. Melusine has once again appeared at Lusignan, to warn that it will be conquered for the king of England, and Jean d'Arras tells the story for its present possessor, the Duke of Berry. The narrative comes full circle as Jean reiterates the truth of such marvels: while none may understand the secrets of God, yet 'he that is replet of scyence naturel, the rather shall haue affection to byleue it' (lxii, 371). The lines make a strikingly explicit connection between natural magic and knowledge of the faery. The narrative thus explores and exploits the nexus of magic, the otherworldly, the marvellous and the monstrous, without ever wholly entering the realm of fantasy. Its mimetic aspects are enhanced by the focus on the actual dynasty of Lusignan, the historical and geographical detail of the narrative, and most of all by the part-human, part-serpent, divided self of Melusine.

The difficulty of interpreting the supernatural is nowhere more marked than in *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*. The poem illustrates particularly well the exploitations of romance by a sophisticated poet, and these include complex play with the motif of magic, the practice of which becomes itself profoundly exploitative.²⁰ Here only Gawain, the human subject, is the victim, and the subtle crafts of magic expose his frailty even while celebrating his excellence. The poet brings together different perspectives by placing the otherworldly lady alongside the male shape-shifter, who himself is multi-faceted. The Green Knight is in part a force of nature, evoking the legendary wild man of the woods, familiar across medieval art, who is also recalled in the 'etaynez' ('giants', 723) who challenge Gawain from the high fells.²¹ The Green Knight's size, his luxuriant hair and beard, his violation of courtly behaviour by riding into the court, armed with an axe not a sword, and his brusque challenge to Arthur's court, 'What, is þis Arþures hous?' (309), all place him as an outsider, and he is dramatically connected with the supernatural in his

¹⁹ On Melusine's nurturing of her children, see further Catherine Légla, 'Nourishing Lineage in the Earliest French Versions of the *Roman de Mélusine*', *Medium Ævum*, 74 (2005), pp. 71–85.

²⁰ My discussion of *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* draws in part on my essay 'Violent Magic in Middle English Romance', in *Violence in Medieval Literature*, ed. Classen, pp. 225–40. I am grateful to the editor for permission to use some of that material here.

²¹ *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, in *The Poems of the Pearl Manuscript*, ed. by Malcolm Andrew and Ronald Waldron (Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 1978), pp. 207–300. All subsequent references to *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* are to this edition, cited by line number.

colour, 'oueral enker grene' ('all over bright green', 150). Yet the Green Knight is also courtly and sophisticated, with his small waist and elegant limbs, his highly ornate costume and decoration, and his ornamented horse. The poet offers a range of different explanations, emphasizing the court's uncertainty as to how to interpret this supernatural phenomenon. He seems an 'aghlich mayster' ('awe-inspiring leader', 136), 'half-etayn in erde' ('half-giant in this world', 140); 'he ferde as freke were fade' ('he carried himself like a fierce warrior', 149), and the court is astonished at this 'meruayle' (233), thinking it 'fantoum and fayryye' (240). The marvelous becomes profoundly menacing with the graphic beheading and grotesquely surreal scene of the court kicking around the head. Most disturbing of all is the Green Knight's departure, as he rides away with his still-speaking severed head:

runyschly° he razt° out, pereas renkkez° stoden, *vigorously reached nobles*
Lazt° to his lufly° hed and lyft hit vp sone; *seized handsome*
And syþen bozez° to his blonk°. *turns horse*

(lines 432–4)

The poet reiterates the Green's Knight's unknown provenance, 'To quat kyth he becom knwe non þere, / Neuer more þen þay wyste fram queþen he watz wonnen' (460–1), perhaps suggesting the possibility of an otherworld whose faery inhabitants may stray into the human world. The court's response is realistic: they laugh, although they speak openly of this 'meruayl among þo menne' (466), and Arthur conceals his wonder, courteously describing the episode as a more comprehensible kind of magic, an illusion, 'laykyng of enterludez' ('playing of interludes', 472) fitting for Christmas.

The Green Knight's power over death itself seems, however, to provide a means to exploit Gawain that goes far beyond theatrical shape-shifting. It is reminiscent of the use of illusion to manipulate Dorigen's words in the *Franklin's Tale*, where the rocks seem as enduring as death: they should no more disappear than the Green Knight should be able to retrieve his head. While Gawain tries hard in his formulation of a contract with the Green Knight to guard against trickery, stating that he will stand a blow only from the Green Knight and 'wyth no wy3 ellez / On lyue' (384–5), he cannot envisage the nature of his opponent's magical power. If he laughs with the king at the departure of the Green Knight, he also thinks, as the seasons turn, on his 'anious uyage' (535), and the court too believes that he will never return. In the Green Chapel, Gawain voices the unfairness of the Green Knight's advantage over him: 'Bot þa3 my hede falle on þe stoncz / I con not hit restore' (2282–3). At Hautdesert, the opposed demands of chivalry – courtesy to the lady, loyalty to the host – bring the different tenets of the Pentangle into conflict, testing Gawain's *trouthe*, but it is the apparent certainty of his death that underpins Gawain's acceptance of the girdle. Perfectly to uphold the chivalric oath is as impossible for fallen man as it would be for Gawain to replace his head – though perhaps the Christian context of chivalry and the image of Mary on the inside of Gawain's shield should also recall that miracle is not impossible to God.

The play on conflicting images of magic is sustained in the poet's treatment of female practitioners of magic: the beautiful wife of Bertilak and the loathly old

woman, later revealed to be Morgan le Fay. As in *Partonope*, the lady who seems to invite courtly pursuit turns out to be firmly in control, and it is striking that the theme of force also recurs in the Lady's apparent invitation to rape: 'Me behouez of fyne force / Your seruauant be, and schale' (1239–40); '3e ar stif innoghe to con-strayne wyth strenkþe, 3if yow lykez' (1496). The peculiar menace of the attempted seduction is heightened by the interwoven narrative of Bertilak's hunt, which echoes the violence of the beheading, most memorably in the graphic description of the dismemberment of the deer, but also in the detailed images of chase, capture and death in the successive hunts of deer, boar and fox. The repeated images of imprisonment, capture and binding used by the Lady parallel the vocabulary of the hunt, so that the sequence of bedchamber scenes seems to depict an otherworldly chase of the enchantress for her prey analogous to those of *Partonope* and *Melusine*. The mores of Arthur's court and of chivalry are probed and pushed to their limits within the strange, magical castle of Hautdesert, with its rival court presided over by Morgan le Fay.

The revelation that the Green Knight is Bertilak and his preservation of Gawain's life leave us unsure as to whether he is to be associated with the devil for luring Gawain into sin and temptation, or with the divine, for acting as arbiter and confessor, whether he is a force of wild nature and seasonal renewal or, as the end of the poem suggests, the civilized, faithful knight and servant of Morgan le Fay, his shape shifted through her magic of illusion. The Green Knight cannot finally be reduced to positive or negative, demonic or divine, pagan or Christian, but the poet's use of these resonances becomes a way of drawing us into both the drama and the enigma of the poem. The gift that in other romances would have been so appropriate, the girdle with its protective virtue, proves, like the Green Knight, the Green Chapel, and the two ladies, not to have been what it seemed. In its way, it is a magical illusion: rather than protecting life, it marks sin; it is the 'falssyng' (2378) that has taught Gawain cowardice and caused him to betray 'larges and lewté, þat longez to kny3tez' (2380). Yet although Gawain sees himself as 'fawty and falce' (2382), Bertilak commends his virtue, presenting him with the girdle, and the court wears the token as a badge of honour: the girdle becomes a marvellous gift of another, positive kind, while the 'kny3ght in þe enker grene' rides 'Whiderwarde-soeuer he wolde' (2477–8). Whereas in the *Franklin's Tale* the motivations of Aurelius and of the clerk are transparent, the Green Knight's exploitation of Gawain is never fully explained: magic remains sinister and ambiguous, a force that places those confronted by it at a severe disadvantage and tests them to the utmost for mysterious purposes.

The exploitations of magic in romance, then, are manifold, drawing on the ambiguous cultural and intellectual history of the practice of magic, and particularly on the opposition between licit and illicit, natural and demonic, benign and malign magic. While the marvellous plays many positive roles in romance, the uses of magic, both human and otherworldly, are also repeatedly exploitative. In all the works considered here – the *Franklin's Tale*, *Partonope of Blois*, *William of Palerne*, *Lybeaus Desconus*, *Melusine* and *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* – magic is manifested in illusion and shape-shifting. Such practices, inevitably linked with

the themes of deceit and trickery, open up profound questions of motivation and morality, as we see so acutely in the *Franklin's Tale*. These may, as with the enchantresses of *Partonope* and *Melusine*, be used positively to fulfil the desires of the hero; yet, as the later events of these romances suggest, magic is never unambiguously good, and more and less subtle questions are raised concerning the intentions of these powerful practitioners of magic. The shape-shifting of the stepmother of *William of Palerne* and the clerks of *Lybeaus Desconus*, by contrast, is unquestionably, menacingly exploitative, made more so by the play on realism and technology in these romances, yet at the same time magical transformation becomes a vehicle for the proof of human virtue, nobility and knighthood. This is perhaps most of all the case in *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, which both constructs and deconstructs the supernatural in its shifting portrayals of shape-shifter and enchantress, and which celebrates the hero even while it proves him imperfect. It is fitting that magic, the art of illusion but also the art of enchantment, should so lend itself to the exploitations of romance writers.

Meeting Grounds: Gardens in Middle English Romance

Arlyn Diamond

The topic of gardens in medieval romance is surely well-tilled ground, at once significant and banal. In all the calendars and engagement books that well-meaning friends and relations give us we see how seductive are those familiar pictures of richly colored flowers and spouting fountains, where the pleasures of artful nature are enjoyed and noble lovers meet.¹ E. R. Curtius, Elizabeth Salter and Derek Pearsall, along with many others, have demonstrated the long literary history and rich symbolic content of the *hortus conclusus*, or *locus amoenus*, a space which in the Middle Ages was known from classical poetry and Biblical commentary even before it came to be actually imitated in later periods of increasing affluence and social display.² Thanks to scholars and critics we have learned that a garden is never simply a space devoted to ornamental plants, but one suffused with meanings, sometimes overlapping, sometimes conflicting, but seemingly always available, most famously in that foundational text for medieval vernacular poetry, the *Roman de la Rose*. As Michael Pollan puts it, even biology itself is apparently complicit in this process of troping nature, making of the green world a readable code:

This stands for that: flowers by their very nature traffic in a kind of metaphor, so that even a meadow of wildflowers brims with meanings not of our making. Move into the garden, however, and the meanings only multiply as the flowers take aim not only at the bee's or the bat's or the butterfly's notions of the good or the beautiful, but at ours as well. Sometime long ago the flower's gift for metaphor crossed with our own, and the offspring of that match, that miraculous symbiosis of desire, are the flowers of the garden.³

At the same time, medieval gardens (and here and throughout I am speaking

¹ Surprisingly, however, the images are much later than the literary models. Kathleen Scott, in *Later Gothic Manuscripts, 1390–1490* (London: Harvey Miller, 1996), identifies only one image of a courtly garden in her survey of manuscripts illuminated in the British Isles. Sylvia Landsberg, in *The Medieval Garden* (London: British Museum Press, 1996), points out that 'only two contemporary plans exist, virtually no realistic illustrations before the late fourteenth century and barely an English one at all' (p. 5).

² E. R. Curtius, *European Literature and the Latin Middle Ages*, trans. by Willard R. Trask (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1990), ch. 10, 'The Ideal Landscape', pp. 183–202; Derek Pearsall and Elizabeth Salter, *Landscapes and Seasons of the Medieval World* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1973).

³ Michael Pollan, *The Botany of Desire* (New York: Random House, 2001), p. 70.

only of the pleasure gardens associated with *gentillesse*) were part of the medieval world in the most material and literal sense. They may have been inspired by literary conventions but were realized in the acts of building, tending and enjoying. They were actual spaces, significant investments of resources, extensions of the household economy ideologically and physically. What I hope to suggest is that looking at the gardens in four popular romances, in parallel with medieval English gardens – or at least what we can know of them – as productions of the same culture, can be a way of thinking about what we sometimes call ‘contextualization’ – that tantalizing confusion of literary convention, social practice and individual text. In particular, my approach owes much to thinking about the ‘spatial imaginary’, the ways in which texts and spaces are ‘cultural productions’, things ‘made’ in particular moments, to be thought of in a dialectical relationship.⁴ Thus, although he is exploring the implications of walking in modern urban landscapes, Michel de Certeau might equally well be discussing how romance writers make use of their generic conventions when he says: ‘These “ways of operating” constitute the innumerable practices by means of which users reappropriate the space [narrative or geographic] organized by techniques of sociocultural production.’⁵ Felicitously, since ‘exploitation’ is the theme of this volume, it is easy to trace the ways in which writers made use of features from the vistas they observed, designers copied in three dimensions the gardens described in popular texts and, within narratives, lovers exploited the possibilities offered by a landscape built to display the wealth and power of the householder for their own transgressive desires.

To begin with a brief example of what I mean by the difference between a garden understood symbolically and one understood as ‘a sociocultural production’ – a very crude distinction which depends as much on how one reads as on what one reads – I would point to the famous scene in Chaucer’s *Knight’s Tale*, when Palamon and Arcite first look out from their grim tower and see Emily in the garden next to it. In a beautiful reworking of the classical topos, Chaucer juxtaposes metaphors of freedom and imprisonment, depicting the contrast between Emily, as the incarnation of spring and love, and the young knights’ harsh fate. Like their gaze, his reading of his source, Boccaccio’s *Teseida*, fixes her as an image, and emphasizes the aesthetic and the figurative. Despite the similarities in conventions between the Italian and English texts, the earlier one is different in tone. Boccaccio tells us that the garden adjoins Emilia’s chamber, and that sometimes she is there alone, ‘drawn by her own inclination’, and sometimes she entertains companions within its walls. Here, as elsewhere in the poem, he reminds us of Emilia’s own desires and the sophisticated life of the court in which she participates:

Thus continuing to visit that beautiful garden sometimes alone and sometimes with others to entertain her, the girl would repeatedly let her gaze stray

⁴ Miles Ogborn, ‘Mapping Words’, *New Foundations*, 57 (2005–6), 145–9.

⁵ Michel de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, trans. by Steven Rendell (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984), p. xiv.

towards the window from which she had first heard Palamon's cry – being drawn to do so not out of love but in order to see if anyone was looking at her.⁶

Boccaccio, working with very familiar elements, makes the link between female agency, lovers' encounters, and gardens that I want to pursue in Middle English romances.

My focus then, like Boccaccio's (or Emilia's), will be on what happens when we look at gardens as *social* spaces, designed for multiple functions beyond the merely aesthetic, and especially at the way that in some romances they appear to permit, or encourage, the crossing of boundaries between ranks and genders. In romances even as diverse as *Sir Launfal*, *William of Palerne*, *Amis and Amiloun* and *The Squire of Low Degree*, the examples I have chosen, the garden is the space where the desires that appear to be prohibited within the walls of the household itself, imagined as the seat of lordship, can be realized.⁷ 'First, if it is true that a spatial order organizes an ensemble of possibilities (e.g. by a space in which one can move) and interdictions (e.g. by a wall that prevents one from going further) then the walker actualizes some of these possibilities. In that way he makes them exist as well as emerge. But he also moves them about and he invents others' (de Certeau, p. 68). Of course, as a sociologist, de Certeau is referring to practices he himself observes in named cities, in his own time, and I am talking about the writers and audiences of romance, thinking of them as establishing what he calls 'a second, poetic geography on top of the literal [...] meaning' (p. 105). Nonetheless, his theories, even if appropriated through metaphor as I am doing here, seem to me to allow us to think about textual and material gardens simultaneously in terms of social practice.

Let me say something briefly about these material gardens. Fortunately, although medieval landscaping, unlike buildings, remains only in the form of what Sylvia Landsberg calls 'lumps and bumps', visible to aerial photography, we have a fair amount of information in the form of plant lists, contemporary descriptions, and documents which attest to the expenditure of financial and human resources in their construction and maintenance and to the high level of skill possessed by designers and gardeners.⁸ We also have a very useful text from the later Middle Ages, describing what gardens were supposed to look like and how they were to be cared for, the Italian Piero de Crescenzi's enormously popular Latin treatise on the establishment and management of an estate. Written in the early

⁶ Chaucer's *Boccaccio*, ed. and trans. by N. R. Havelly (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 1980), p. 114.

⁷ Felicity Heal sums up standard thinking when she says that 'the great household in late medieval England was the principal focus not only of elite consumption but also of social exchange [...] and] carried a heavy burden of social purposes and meanings': 'Reciprocity and Exchange in the Late Medieval Household', in *Bodies and Disciplines*, ed. by Barbara Hanawalt and David Wallace (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996), pp. 179–98 (p. 179).

⁸ Landsberg's *The Medieval Garden* (see note 1), part of the British Museum's series on medieval arts and crafts, is designed for those who wish to try to recreate a medieval garden, and is a very accessible survey of what is known. Teresa McLean, in *Medieval English Gardens* (New York: Viking, 1980), provides a historical survey of various kinds of gardens.

fourteenth century, this practical guide borrowed closely from an earlier text by Albertus Magnus in the section which describes gardens of the kind imagined in romance:

Let, therefore, a flat place be chosen, not marshy nor screened from the breath of good winds and in which springs flow. The spot should be of twenty *jugers* (12½ acres) or more, according to the will of the lord, and surrounded by convenient and lofty walls; in the north part a grove of diverse trees should be planted [...]. On the south part let a handsome palace be built, to which the king or queen may resort when they wish to escape from grave thoughts and to refresh themselves by these joys and solaces; let tempered shade be made for the summer in the garden and the windows with views over the garden be provided with openings which shall have an ordered shade [...]. Also there should be in the garden a construction with walks and bowers made entirely of leafy trees, in which the king and queen with the barons and lords may sojourn under cover without rain. So in this fashion the palace may be made pleasant. The whole space beside the walks and walls should be measured out and fruit trees planted in places along the walls where you please [...]; elsewhere may be made arbors of wood or trees and covered with vines.⁹

The language of the passage speaks to delight and gratification, but these are explicitly linked to wealth, for this is the garden appropriate to 'kings and other illustrious and rich lords' (p. 172). In a world where legislative bodies attempted to use sumptuary laws to enforce class divisions, possessions are never innocent of social implications. In the *Roman de la Rose* the garden of the God of Mirth deliberately excludes Poverty. The anthropologist Jack Goody points out in his fascinating book *The Culture of Flowers* that

the growth of the culture of flowers represents a growth of the standard of living of the rich. It begins as a matter of differentiation, of luxury, which involves the diversion of limited resources and human energies to producing goods and services for the minority.¹⁰

Enclosed gardens can be seen as analogous to deer parks. According to Christopher Dyer, 'game symbolized the aristocratic style of life. [...] The fences that separated the game from the non-aristocrats, like moats, castle walls and monastic precincts, gave physical expression to social barriers' (p. 61).

⁹ Quoted from Robert G. Calkins, 'Piero de' Crescenzi and the Medieval Garden', in *Medieval Gardens*, ed. by Elisabeth B. MacDougall, Dumbarton Oaks Colloquium on the History of Landscape Architecture 9 (Washington, DC: Dumbarton Oaks Research Library and Collection, 1986), pp. 155–73 (p. 173).

¹⁰ Jack Goody, *The Culture of Flowers* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), p. 65. Here Goody is speaking of Imperial Rome, but he makes the same observation about medieval Europe, pp. 157, 160–1. Christopher Dyer's examination of aristocratic incomes, in *Standards of Living in the Later Middle Ages* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), pp. 27–48, makes it clear that the productivity of agricultural land was crucial to landowners' economic viability.

Like the medieval deer park, then, or the gentleman's library, or the landscaped vistas of later periods, such a garden is a mark of one's status and taste, having value symbolically, affectively and economically. It is designed for strolling through as well as viewing from afar. Within the extensive walls there is richness and variety of flora and fauna, as well as of spatial configurations – fishponds, habitats for deer and rabbits, nightingales, blackbirds, goldfinches, linnets, cherries, apples, willows and more. We might note particularly that its different elements allow for privacy and withdrawal as well as activities like dancing or the playing of games. What de Crescenzi offers seems in basic outline to be the garden we recognize from the earliest French romances, although there were undoubtedly, as those of us who attempt our own gardens know, changes in fashion, and local variations.¹¹ According to Calkins, neither de Crescenzi nor his sources are innovators. Rather, 'they seem to be describing traditional layouts which they observed being used around them and which appear to have been in continual use into the fifteenth century' (p. 164). There are 141 surviving manuscripts of de Crescenzi, in vernacular as well as Latin versions. Although there is no surviving English translation, several copies were owned by English royalty and lords. During the period in which our romances flourished, his book was widely read and circulated, evidence of both interest in gardens and the staying power of this model.

It is easy to see how de Crescenzi's garden is derived, in conception as well as details, from the kinds of late classical exercises in rhetoric Curtius describes in his study of the influence of classical literary motifs, such as the depiction of an idealized landscape, on medieval literature. In the Middle Ages literary flowers seem to have come before real ones, since the collapse of Roman civilization meant that ornamental gardens essentially disappeared in Europe until the early middle ages, while the poetry of the *locus amoenus* survived (Goody, p. 130). One medieval garden we know of through numerous descriptions is an example of how, to use Goody's terms in *The Culture of Flowers*, the literary gesture provides an incentive for horticultural performance (p. 127). The detailed and astonishing descriptions of Robert d'Artois's fourteenth-century garden at Hesdin, with its mechanical monkeys and spouting fountains, show us a place meant to entertain one's peers and impress one's rivals. Because it is so well documented and was so widely admired, it suggests the kinds of investments the wealthy and powerful were prepared to make in the interests of status. It also suggests the complexity of the relationship between gardens and texts. Machaut seems to have used it as the setting for the *Remède de Fortune*, and Anne Hagopian Van Buren has argued that 'the imagery from French romances is realized at Hesdin'.¹² Howard Colvin speculates that the water garden at Henry II's manor of Everswell was inspired by

¹¹ As Derek Pearsall notes in 'Gardens as Symbol and Setting', in *Medieval Gardens*, ed. McDougall, pp. 235–51, 'in these lyrics, debates and romances, we encounter something of actuality: the gardens they describe had their material counterparts in the seigneurial life so familiar to poets and patrons' (p. 241).

¹² Anne Hagopian Van Buren, 'Reality and Literary Romance in the Park of Hesdin', in *Medieval Gardens*, ed. MacDougall, pp. 115–34 (p. 118).

Tristan.¹³ Romances don't just recycle literary conventions. It appears that they in turn inspire gardens, inflaming their readers with the desire for the flowery meads that accompany well-born lovers.

Nonetheless, to think about gardens purely through the lens of literature is to miss much of what we might call the practice of horticulture in the later Middle Ages. Valuable as the passage cited above is for those studying romances, it is only a relatively minor section of de Crescenzi's text, giving evidence that for its readers the garden designed purely for leisure was only a part of a larger entity – the estate as a whole, part of the lord's domain. London, BL, Additional MS 19720, a deluxe fifteenth-century French translation of de Crescenzi, contains over 300 large folios. Of its twelve books, only one (part of which is cited above) spends time on the pleasure garden. The rest of the treatise is full of practical information on what trees to plant, how to stake, prune and graft vines, when to fertilize vegetables, the use of medicinal plants, the care of pigs and horses – a compendium of agricultural and horticultural knowledge. The illustrations of this manuscript (which are reproduced in Calkins's article, along with examples from other manuscripts) have nothing resembling a lover, and very few figures suggesting ladies and gentlemen of leisure. Instead, the figure of the lord dominates, making his plans and building his estate. I would argue that like de Crescenzi's pleasure garden, the romance gardens I am considering are part of a larger and horticulturally varied estate, itself part of the lord's domain. These romance gardens are materially and culturally embedded in that central institution of the middle ages, the household, which is the heart of lordship with all its attendant meanings. As the centre of social and economic networks, the household was frequently and perhaps inevitably the site of conflicts over social status and economic resources. My readings below of four romances (*William of Palerne*, *The Squire of Low Degree*, *Sir Launfal* and *Amis and Amiloun*) suggest that in them fantasies of sensual delight and personal fulfillment are often suffused with anxieties about social standing and access to wealth and power within the household, and that the garden is a significant site for the literary resolution of these anxieties.

Perhaps because it is enclosed we tend to think of the medieval garden, whether historical or literary, as a private space, an escape from what were highly communal living arrangements, but in so doing we isolate both the space itself and the protagonist's presence within its leafy seclusion from the social context revealed in surviving records or carefully delineated within narratives.¹⁴ While romances often play with the tensions between public and private, appropriate behavior and individual desire, both performed within the garden walls, it is clear that actual gardens could be both private and public in practical rather than psychological terms, that is, extensions of the household to be utilized not just for private

¹³ Howard Colvin, 'Royal Gardens in Medieval England', in *Medieval Gardens*, ed. by MacDougall, pp. 7–22 (pp. 19–20). Teresa McLean also makes a connection between Everswell and *Tristan* (*Medieval English Gardens*, p. 101), although neither she nor Colvin refers to a specific text of the romance, alluding rather to the popularity of the story in the twelfth century.

¹⁴ The focus on privacy is a commonplace in discussions of gardens. See, for example, Marilyn Stokstad, 'The Garden as Art', in *Medieval Gardens*, ed. MacDougall, pp. 175–85 (p. 181).

enjoyment but for public functions. In her examination of marriage practices in late-medieval London, Shannon McSheffrey notes that

two other common locations for marriage contracts, the parlor and the garden, have been described as the 'most private' spaces in a late-medieval house, to judge by access patterns (which measure the distance and number of thresholds that must be crossed to reach different parts of the house); but as they were designed at least partly for the entertainment of guests, they were quite suitable for discussions related to marriage and for the formal, witnessed exchange of consent.¹⁵

Christine de Pisan's 'wise princess' also finds both use and pleasure in her garden. After what seems a very long day fulfilling her duties, 'if it is summer, she will go off to amuse herself in a garden until supper-time, walking up and down for her health. She will wish that if any persons need to see her for any reason they be allowed to enter and she will hear them.'¹⁶ Christine is here obviously equating virtue with the lady's perpetual performance of her public function (somewhat like de Crescenzi's pious king), so that even in a garden she feels no desires independent of her role. Given her notorious quarrel with the *Roman de la Rose*, Christine here seems to be rewriting the trope of the garden as the site of idleness and delight or, rather, she is depicting it in functional rather than literary terms. For the wise princess the garden is a respectable pleasure, a physical extension of her household, with its attendant duties and rewards; for the more daring princesses of romance, the garden offers other kinds of opportunities.

In the rest of this chapter I want to look at two different kinds of garden encounters in the romance which I think reveal interesting confluences of social and spatial imagination within particular texts. My first and in the end less problematic narrative moment might be called 'the lover in the orchard'. Visual images of these gardens emphasize what Marilyn Stokstad calls 'the aesthetic of the boundary' (p. 182), freezing figures within the frames of walls, but gardens in romance seem to be meant for human use, especially for significant and otherwise impossible meetings. Solitary contemplation is never an end in itself. Guillaume de Lorris's famous garden of the *Roman de la Rose* is so enticing to the young narrator because within its walls he will be able to dance and flirt and fall in love. In moving through it he is represented as writing his own narrative, to use de Certeau's terms, as do the protagonists of romance.

In *William of Palerne*, a charming early alliterative romance, William, who believes himself to be a foundling, is in love with the emperor's daughter Melior.¹⁷

¹⁵ Shannon McSheffrey, 'Place, Space and Situation: Public and Private in the Making of Marriage in Late-Medieval London', *Speculum*, 79 (2004), 960–90 (p. 976).

¹⁶ Christine de Pisan, *The Treasure of the City of Ladies*, trans. by Sarah Lawson (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1985), p. 61.

¹⁷ *William of Palerne: An Alliterative Romance*, ed. by G. H. V. Bunt (Groningen: Bouma's Boekhuis, 1985). All citations will be from this edition, although I have modernized the alphabet. William, of royal birth, is kidnapped by a friendly werewolf who saves him from a wicked uncle. Living with a cowherd in pastoral contentment, he is rescued by the emperor of Rome. He runs away with Melior,

The Exploitations of Medieval Romance

He sees Melior in hall and in her apartments, but only officially, as one of her attendants. Unable to speak his longing, he spends his days hidden, feeding his love and grief on glimpses of her:

That unglad gom than goth into a gardin evene,
That was a perles place for ani prince of erthe,
And wynli with hei wal was closed al aboute.
That previ pleyng place, to prove the soothe,
Joined wel justly to Melior chamber.
Thider went William evene, wittow for soothe,
And under a tri appeltre tok him tid a sete,
that was braunched ful brode and bar gret schadue,
and was even under a windowe of that worthies chaumber
For that William for wo was bounde so harde.

(lines 747–56)

Such intense and elevated feelings, the poem suggests, are properly expressed in a garden, and having chosen to perform his role on the correct stage, William is then entitled to find joy in love.

Melior, equally attracted, equally lovelorn, comes in to the beautifully described garden with her confidante Alisaundrine, looking for comfort in the flowers and birds:

And whan the gaye gerles were into the gardin come,
Faire floures thei founde of fele maner hewes,
That swete were of savor and to the sight gode;
And eche busch ful of brides that blitheliche song,
Bothe the thrusch and the thrustele, bi xxxti of bothe,
Meleden ful merye in maner of here kinde.

(lines 816–21)

They are the ones who discover the vulnerable William, asleep in the shelter of the apple tree and dreaming of Melior. Approaching him at ‘a god pas’ (line 851), she reveals her love to the astonished, blushing, speechless William. Although elsewhere in the poem he is depicted as an invincible knight, his ultimate happiness depends on her freedom to express her desires. Rank, not gender, enables decisive narrative action. The garden which lies under Melior’s gaze, part of her domain as the heiress to the Emperor, yet at the same time accessible to the foundling William, by its very design enables them to meet.

William, with its delight in emotions, its marvellous adventures leading to the requisite happy ending, its extended dialogues and rich descriptive detail, fulfills our expectations of romance as the realm of delight. Despite differences in form, it never strays too far from the spirit of its early-thirteenth-century French original. The peculiar late romance *The Squire of Low Degree* is very unlike *William*

the emperor’s daughter, returning unknowing to his own kingdom of Sicily, where he rescues his mother and sister, undoes the werewolf’s enchantment, and becomes both king and emperor.

in significant ways, lacking the expansiveness and poetic playfulness of the much longer alliterative poem, but like the earlier romance it is an exploration of the relationship between a high-ranking heiress and a worthy but dependent knight, one who is valued within the household but lacks the holdings to make him a possible suitor:

The squire set him on his knee
And saide, 'Lady, it is for thee;
I have loved this seven yere
And bought thy love, lady, full dere.
Ye are so riche in youre array
That one word to you I dare not say; [...]
Ye might have bewraied me to the Kinge
And brought me sone to my endinge'.¹⁸

His declaration is, like William's, a response to the solicitations of the King's daughter, who promises to be his 'bote of bale' (113). Like William, he sits under a tree grieving over his hopeless love:

And evermore whan he was wo,
Into that arber wolde he go
And under a bente he laide him lowe,
Right even under her chamber window;
And lened his backe to a thorne
And said, 'Alas, that I was borne!'
(lines 63–8)

Hearing his 'mourning all' (91), the princess (who is never named) undoes the latch of her window, 'closed well with royall glass' (94), and urges him to tell her his woes. Here, as in my previous example, the garden belongs to the higher-ranking female. Elsewhere in these narratives we are given ample evidence of the prowess (and therefore worthiness) of the suitors, but what is emphasized in the scenes I am discussing is the hero's enforced passivity, the consequence of his low status. In both cases he is already in love with the woman who 'owns' the garden, but cannot hope to win her because of the disparity in rank. The lover is depicted as solitary, not just because that is the way lovers act, but also because he is convinced that his ambitions, if known, would bring reprisal from the king.

For the lower-ranking male the garden offers a solitude apparently otherwise difficult to come by, whereas females seem to desire companionship. The description of the garden in the late romance *The Squire of Low Degree* makes it especially clear that status is the central issue. *William's* garden is imbued with the familiar gratifications of courtly description, foregrounding the pleasures and sensations

¹⁸ *The Squire of Low Degree*, ed. by Donald Sands, in *Middle English Verse Romances* (New York: Holt, Rinehart & Winston, 1966), pp. 249–78 (lines 115–26). All citations are from this edition, which is based on the only complete text, a printed version from the mid-1500s. While the squire is off earning the right to marry her by deeds of prowess in foreign lands, the lady preserves what she thinks is his dead body in her chamber for seven years.

evoked within it. The *Squire's* garden is notable, in a text which otherwise leaves out crucial narrative elements, for the number of lines it devotes to a catalogue of garden elements, part classical topos, part catalogue of possessions.¹⁹ This is the sort of garden that announces rank as much as taste. The difference between the two romances – one foregrounding pleasure, the other foregrounding accumulated wealth – is not inexplicable, however, since William is actually of royal birth, whereas the squire, while of honorable birth, really does lack money and connections. The first garden is a beautiful spot to enjoy the fantasy that *gentillesse* is about nature rather than rank, whereas the second is a genuine, if singularly odd, attempt to depict a hero's triumph over a system designed to keep him in his place as he lurks hopelessly in the bushes he cannot own.

In these romances the garden is literally and symbolically the place where boundaries can be crossed, and yet it is itself bounded by the walls that distinguish it from wilderness and agricultural field, and by the castle whose overlooking windows act as both barrier and connection. Although the *hortus conclusus* often presents itself as an alternative world, in the popular romance as in medieval practice, it is still part of the world. Open, permeable, the garden is at the same time a space defined by ideas and practices of desire and pleasure and the possessions which define rank. Each of the male protagonists of the romances I am discussing has his own chambers, in which the lovers do actually meet once their feelings are made known in the garden, but inside the walls of the household they cannot be represented as speaking freely across the boundaries of birth and status. In these examples, then, the garden becomes not only a utopian space itself, but the space where utopian fantasies of true love and the triumph of innate *gentillesse* can be realized. Entering the garden, the lovers rewrite the inherited plots of family aspiration, even as, in writing the garden, the authors remind us of the brutal realities of a world where rank and wealth belong by right to only a few.

My first examples can be seen as benign interrogations of the relationship between gender and status, since the lovers' mutual attraction and anticipated happy ending help ameliorate the hero's enforced passivity, or feminization. My other examples are much more problematic, and have an even more radically destabilizing effect on the traditional pattern of aggressive males and submissive females waiting to be courted.²⁰ These might be listed under the rubric 'the gaze of the predatory queen'. In Marie de France's *Lanval* and in the Middle English

¹⁹ Of the poem's 1131 lines, almost forty are devoted to the description of the garden. The poet lists close to twenty kinds of trees and flowers, and about the same number of species of birds.

²⁰ Elizabeth Augspach provides an example of the pervasiveness of this stereotype when she says, 'the ladies of romance move the action from the ardors of battle and adventure to the plane of refreshments and rewards. The male gaze is charged with desire and anticipates pleasures as it rests on the prize which will crown his achievement': *The Garden as Woman's Space in Twelfth- and Thirteenth-Century Literature*, *Studies in Medieval Literature* 27 (Lewiston: Mellen, 2004), pp. 2–3. The limitations of this assumption of female passivity are demonstrated in Judith Weiss's article 'The Wooing Woman in Anglo-Norman Romance', in *Romance in Medieval England*, ed. by Maldwyn Mills, Jennifer Fellows and Carol M. Meale (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 1991), pp. 149–61. Weiss cites a number of romances, both Anglo-Norman and Middle English, where women initiate the relationship.

Diamond: Meeting Grounds

Sir Launfal, when the hero returns to court newly enriched by his fairy mistress Arthur's knights and ladies are suddenly struck by virtues they had previously seemed to ignore. In both the Middle English and the French, it is the sight of him from her window that incites Guinevere's love (or lust), and the garden that becomes the stage for her wooing.²¹

And aftyr mete Syr Gaweyn,
Syr Gyryes and Agrafayn,
And Syr Launfal also
Went to daunce upon the grene
Under the tour ther lay the Quene
Wyth sixty ladyes and mo.
To lede the daunce Launfal was set.
For hys largesse he was lovede the bet
Sertayn, of alle tho.
The Quene lay out and beheld hem alle:
'I se', sche seyde, 'daunce large Launfalle;
To hym than wyll y go.'

'Of alle the knyghtes that y se there,
He ys the fayreste bachelor.
He ne hadde never no wyf;
Tyde me good other ylle,
I wyll go and wyte hys wyll:
Y love hym as my lyf!
Sche tok with her a companye,
The fairest that sche myghte aspye –
Syxty ladyes and fyf –
And wente hem doun anoon ryghtes,
Ham to pley among the knyghtes,
Well style wythouten stryf.²²

She then draws him aside to declare her love, becoming furious when he turns her down; his loyalty to his mistress precipitates the crisis which drives him from Arthur's corrupt court forever.

Launfal seems to take the conventions of romance too literally, as if he himself were a naïve reader of romances, unwilling or unable to recognize the economic and social underpinnings of the knightly identity he desires. Moving through the formal measures of medieval dance with Gawain and other members of the Round Table, in the green space designed for courtly pleasure, he believes he is once more a member of the court, but this garden is under the queen's predatory gaze. No

²¹ In their translation of *Lanval* (in *The Lais of Marie de France* (Durham, NC: Labyrinth, 1978), pp. 105–25, esp. lines 219–68), Joan Ferrante and Robert Hanning refer to the garden as an 'orchard', but it is clearly the kind of social space described by de Crescenzi.

²² *Sir Launfal*, in *The Middle English Breton Lays*, ed. by Anne Laskaya and Eve Salisbury, TEAMS (Kalamazoo: Medieval Institute Publications, 1995), lines 637–60.

space in the 'real' world of the poem is free of the workings of power, whether political or economic. When the queen comes down, she goes to 'the formeste ende / Betwene Launfal and Gauweyn the hende' (661–2). Cutting Launfal out of the herd, she turns the space into a hunting ground. The description of the royal garden in the poem, impoverished in comparison to the long, lush descriptions of his lover Tryamour's body and possessions, is sufficient here to evoke the idea of an ideal setting, but one which turns out to be inadequate for the hero's desires. Launfal and the queen have conflicting claims to the green space they share, or perhaps competing versions of its meaning. In the end the hero goes into exile, exchanging the social world of the dance and the tournament for a fantasy of fulfillment in the person of the infinitely powerful and forgiving mistress.

In the very different romance of *Amis and Amiloun*, the garden also becomes the stage for clashing desires and entitlements. Here the pleasures of the garden are not just suggested but spelled out, in a way which might seem too familiar to be worth investigating, and yet the very language of 'solas' turns out to be deliberately misleading. Suffering from an unnamed malady,

That hendi knight bethought him tho,
Into the gardin he wold go,
For to solas him thare.
Under a bough as he gan bide,
To here the foules song that tide,
Hym thought a blisseful fare.²³

The conventions might encourage us to anticipate a meeting of lovers, yet, unlike in the other romances, it is not suggested that Amis is in love, and in fact he might well be grieving over the loss of his sworn brother Amiloun. The king's daughter Belisaunt, on the other hand, as we are told at length, suffers intensely for love of him. In the garden where she is sent by her mother, who seems fully sympathetic to her longings,

Sche herd the foules gret and smale,
The swete note of the nightingale,
Ful mirily sing on tre;
Ac hir hert was so hard ibrought,
On love-longing was al hir thought,
No might hir gamen no gle.

(lines 535–40)

Spying the noble and virtuous Amis, she declares her love, but his response is a violation of the conventions by which she is operating, a refusal based on prudence and moral virtue. His is the language of sermon and homily, hers the language of courtly lyric. Belisaunt begins by claiming that their love would be natural since he is a 'gentil knight' (577) and she is 'a bird in bour bright' (578) but when

²³ *Amis and Amiloun*, in *'Amis and Amiloun', 'Robert of Sicily' and 'Sir Amadace'*, ed. by Edward E. Foster, TEAMS (Kalamazoo: Medieval Institute Publications, 1997), lines 511–16.

that argument fails she asserts a different set of identities, based on status rather than innate qualities. Her angry words, 'Al thi precheing helpeth nought' (626) mark a radical shift from 'mirie maiden' (613) to lord's daughter. As Judith Weiss has shown, her advance and his rejection are part of the complex moral economy of the poem.²⁴ Setting this scene in the garden also makes their relationship part of a social geography familiar from other contexts. The English poet, unlike the Anglo-Norman, has staged their encounter in a site which is embedded not only in romance but in the hierarchies which dominate the lovers' world. Threatened with an accusation of rape, fearing his lord's retaliation if the affair is discovered, Amis is shown at this moment to be totally vulnerable, because despite all his praiseworthy qualities he is landless (unlike Amiloun) and therefore without power. Driven out of the garden, he hastens into the hall, to take up his duties as 'boteler', valued but subservient.

All of my examples seem to challenge the widespread assumption of a natural and benign relationship between women and gardens. The historian Howard Colvin simply asserts that 'gardens were, moreover, the especial province of women' and documentary evidence in the form of household accounts seems to reaffirm his claim.²⁵ Loveday Lewes Gee includes gardens as examples of women's artistic patronage.²⁶ Robert d'Artois's daughter Mahaut built notable gardens of her own. In her book *Medieval English Gardens*, Teresa McLean records a number of instances of gardens made for women. Here are just a few scattered examples: Henry III built gardens for Eleanor of Provence. In 1256 the king 'had glass windows put in the Queen's chamber [...] facing on to the King's herb garden'. This was a new garden, specially laid out next to the Queen's chamber so she could look at it through her windows (p. 94). A garden was made for Rosamond Clifford at Woodstock (p. 100), and Eleanor of Castile and Anne of Bohemia had gardens made or improved for them (p. 102). The accounts of Eleanor, Countess of Leicester and wife of Simon de Montfort, show that an interest in gardening was a general preoccupation of the higher aristocracy. English records, according to McLean, show that 'if a castle had gardens, they were often herb gardens and pleasaunces next to the lady's chamber' (p. 96). This is not a detail found in the classical topos, but in three of my four romances the relationship between garden and window forms an important part of the plot, suggesting that literary convention has been inflected by the built environment. Readers would understand that the person who overlooks the garden is exerting a claim of dominance over it. Incorporating the topos of the garden in a culture which has invested a great deal in actual gardens, the very different texts I have drawn upon seem inevitably to have understood them as implicated in the questions of access and ownership, rank and ambition, which are so powerfully part of medieval society.

In *The Arts of Possession*, D. Vance Smith argues that 'the discursive frame of

²⁴ Weiss, 'The Wooing Woman', pp. 157–9.

²⁵ Colvin, 'Royal Gardens in Medieval England', p. 9.

²⁶ Loveday Lewes Gee, *Women, Art and Patronage from Henry III to Edward III: 1216–1377* (Woodbridge: Boydell, 2002), pp. 11, 55–62.

the fourteenth-century English romance takes on an economic cast [...] it is concerned in inextricable ways with matters that are relegated to the household'.²⁷ This claim is an important one for the argument I am making, although, for reasons that are never explained, Smith explicitly excludes 'space' as a critical lens through which to examine what he calls the 'household imaginary' (pp. 4, 50). Unlike Kate Mertes, Felicity Heal or Christopher Dyer,²⁸ he is not particularly interested in the possibility of divergent and often competing interests among members of the household, but it is precisely these interests – of women and men marginalized by rank or wealth – which are dramatized and then resolved in romances such as *William* or *The Squire of Low Degree*. As Felicity Heal points out, 'the environment in which the great household had to operate was uncertain, discontinuous, and prone to sudden collapse. Its symbolic world was equally vulnerable: its capacity to enforce the specific conception of its head was uncertain, and the possibilities of subversion were ever present' (p. 189).

It is possible to see the garden merely as a space which represents the rituals and pleasure of courtly life it is meant to contain – dining, dancing, socializing, listening to music. At the same time it is not only a representation but the literal ground on which members of a household historically perform (or subvert) their assigned roles. Built in the later middle ages as a public assertion of status, used for public occasions, the medieval pleasure garden seems to become in the romance an eroticized space which reforms or repudiates the demands of rank or female obedience. It is no accident that in the moralistic *Erle of Tolous*, a romance which, as I have argued elsewhere, deliberately rejects the possibility of adultery, the lovers only meet in a church, never in a garden, which by convention is a space charged with the opportunity for transgressive love.²⁹ The specificity and historicity of spatial organization in the representation of gardens in the four texts analyzed above suggests that gardens are more than literary signifiers of certain kinds of (erotic) activities. Too often popular romances are accused of being unimaginative compilations of stale formulas, but I would argue for a knowing deployment of the conventions in these texts. Whether or not real gardens were sometimes exploited as they seem to be in romance, as socially constructed spaces which allow an unofficial yet sanctioned breaking of the official rules, they offered to authors and audiences familiar with the literary models a richly reflexive connection between text and built environment.

²⁷ D. Vance Smith, *The Arts of Possession: The Middle English Household Imaginary* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2002), p. 6.

²⁸ Dyer, *Standards of Living in the Later Middle Ages*; Heal, 'Reciprocity and Exchange'; Kate Mertes, *The English Noble Household, 1250–1600* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1988).

²⁹ Arlyn Diamond, 'The Erle of Tolous: The Price of Virtue', in *Medieval Insular Romance: Translation and Innovation*, ed. by Judith Weiss, Jennifer Fellows and Morgan Dickson (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2000), pp. 83–92.

‘Als for the worthynes of þe romance’:
Exploitation of Genre in the
Buik of King Alexander the Conqueror

Anna Caughey

The *Buik of King Alexander the Conqueror* is a decasyllabic poem dealing with the adventures of Alexander from conception to death, running to 19,369 lines.¹ Although it describes itself as a ‘translation’ it is based to varying degrees on multiple Alexandriads and a number of other texts, in languages that include French, Latin, and Older Scots. One of its most interesting qualities is the way in which it exploits the romance form to incorporate multiple genre identities, demarcating the phases of Alexander’s career. The text thus falls into four sections identifiable in terms of their major generic influences: first, ‘epic’ writing concerned above all with military expertise and tactics, and with the establishment of Alexander’s career as a ‘mirror for princes’; second, the conventional courtly romance, and particularly the tropes associated with *fin amors*; third, the ‘Wonders of the East’ tradition; and fourth, tragedy and ‘fall literature’.

The *Buik of King Alexander* identifies itself simply as a ‘romanyis’ that is concerned with demonstrating ideal conduct for princes via ‘the worthe deidis of men þat war worthie’ (2056). However, the sharp swings in the poem’s values, textual preoccupations, settings and even its characterization of Alexander himself suggest that the *Buik* in fact exploits the genre of ‘romanyis’ to include as many different types of writing as possible. All four sections have their precedents in the earlier Alexander romances of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, and versions of many of these were used by the poet as source material. There is also evidence of genre hybridization in earlier insular Alexandriads, such as the *Roman de toute chevalerie* or ‘Anglo-Norman Alexander’, which successfully combines romance, epic and the ‘Wonders of the East’.² However, transitions in the style, character and priorities of the writing in the *Buik* are particularly numerous, striking and clearly delineated, and later in the text sometimes serve to complicate and undermine earlier material. This indicates either a clear knowledge and deliberate exploitation of medieval genre on the part of the poet, or generic influence from his source material, or both.

¹ The *Buik of King Alexander the Conqueror* is not to be confused with the *Buik of Alexander*, translated around 1438 and printed by Alexander Arbuthnet c. 1580. See *The Buik of King Alexander the Conqueror*, ed. by John Cartwright (Edinburgh: Scottish Text Society Fourth Series 16, 1986), II, pp. xvii–xviii.

² Judith Weiss, ‘Insular Beginnings: Anglo-Norman Romance’, in *A Companion to Romance from Classical to Contemporary*, ed. by Corinne Saunders (Oxford: Blackwell, 2004), pp. 26–44 (p. 32).

The *Buik* survives in two witnesses, both of which were owned by Duncan Campbell, seventh laird of Glenorchy (d. 1631), and subsequently held at Taymouth Castle. Both were produced in the sixteenth century, with the first now known as London, BL, Additional MS 40732 and the second as Edinburgh, National Archives of Scotland, MS GD 112/71/9. Although Gilbert Hay is widely considered to have completed the poem for Lord Thomas Erskine in approximately 1460, the poem survives only in these two witnesses, which are in turn derived from a late fifteenth-century copy which may not even closely resemble Hay's work. The colophon tells us that the original was '[t]ranslaittit [...] forsuith, as I hard say, / At þe instance off Lord Erskine, be Schir Gilbert þe Hay' (19,319–20) and recopied when 'fra Chryist the cours of 3eiris culd descend / A thowsand four hundreth nyntie 3eiris and nyne' (19,357–8). It is likely that this process of recopying changed the text significantly. However, the extent and character of this alteration are difficult to gauge and, as Sally Mapstone notes, 'the relationship of the BKA as it now stands to Hay's original work remains in dispute', so much so that some critics, such as Matthew McDiarmid, have questioned whether the surviving text can be considered to be Hay's at all.³ However, the poem's linguistic and ideological similarities to Hay's prose works, and the copyist's own statements, argue against this hypothesis. Meanwhile, although the absence of what McDiarmid calls 'Hay's Gallicisms' (the use of French spellings and occasionally grammar seen in his prose works) may provide evidence for another author, it could also simply suggest further Scotticization of Hay's original text by the 1499 redactor.⁴ Frustratingly, we have very few clues as to the identity of this copyist, which makes it still more difficult to determine what changes he (or even she) might have made, or how these have affected the text. The book's original divisions, if any, are not specifically textually or visually indicated in either of the surviving copies, but the narrator's reference to the depiction of strange creatures and customs in 'the thrid buke þat here is' (7298) suggests that there may once have been a three- or even a four-part division in the poem, which may have been conducted along genre lines similar to those discussed here.

The *Buik of King Alexander the Conqueror* 'handles its sources more freely than most of the Middle English accounts of Alexander's life', and incorporates many of the generic differences of its sources into its text, which accounts at least to some extent for the 'patchwork-like' quality of the *Buik* as it moves from sub-genre to sub-genre.⁵ The poet bases his work upon the sources arguably most central to the canon of the medieval Alexandriad: these texts, which the poet refers to as

³ Sally Mapstone, 'The Scots *Buke of Phisnomy* and Sir Gilbert Hay', in *The Renaissance in Scotland: Studies in Literature, Religion, History and Culture Offered to John Durkan*, ed. by A. A. MacDonald, Michael Lynch and Ian B. Cowan (Leiden: Brill, 1994), pp. 1–44 (p. 1); Matthew P. McDiarmid, 'Concerning Sir Gilbert Hay, the Authorship of *Alexander the Conqueror* and *The Buik of Alexander*', *Studies in Scottish Literature*, 28 (1993), pp. 28–54 (p. 44).

⁴ McDiarmid, 'Concerning Sir Gilbert Hay', p. 44.

⁵ Joanna Martin, '“Of Wisdome and of Guide Governance”: Sir Gilbert Hay and *The Buik of King Alexander the Conqueror*', in *A Companion to Medieval Scottish Poetry*, ed. by Priscilla Bawcutt and Janet Hadley Williams (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2006), pp. 75–89 (p. 75).

the 'Lateine' (18,561) and 'Frensche' (19,334) books, are likely to have been the twelfth-century J2 recension of the *Historia de Preliis*, Alexandre de Paris's *Roman d'Alexandre* (c. 1165–75) and/or the French *Prose Alexander* (c. 1252–90).⁶ These texts are rooted in the tradition of the Hellenistic Pseudo-Callisthenes, an anonymous Greek prose work produced at some point between 200 BC and AD 200, now lost in its original form but an important influence on the medieval European Alexander tradition.⁷ The poet also draws recognizably upon the *Fuerre de Gadres*,⁸ *Le Voyage d'Alexandre au paradis terrestre*⁹ and the *Epistola Alexandri ad Aristotelem*.¹⁰ Additionally, the poet incorporates elements from non-Alexandriad

⁶ Ibid., p. 77. The *Historia de Preliis* is directly descended from Leo of Naples's Latin rendering of a Greek manuscript of the Pseudo-Callisthenes romance, produced between 951 and 969 under the orders of Duke John III of Naples. It was originally entitled *Nativitas et Victoria Alexandri Magni*, later becoming known as the *Historia de Preliis*, and was a tremendously popular version of the Alexandriad. Although its original text does not survive, versions of the book remain in three Latin textual traditions, the third of which was divided in turn into three recensions. The first of these (J1) remained closer to Leo's original, the second (J2) considerably expanded it using material from Orosius and other writers, and the third (J3) added a 'stylistic and material rewording with [...] moralising interpolations' (*The History of Alexander's Battles: Historia de Preliis – The J1 Version*, trans. by R. Telfryn Pritchard (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 1992), p. 9). Given that J2 was the source for both the Old French *Prose Alexander* and at least one of the Middle English Alexander fragments, it seems likely, although still not entirely certain, that the Buik's poet was working from this tradition. See *The Gestes of King Alexander of Macedon: Two Middle-English Alliterative Fragments, Alexander A and Alexander B*, ed. by Francis Peabody Magoun (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1929), p. 40; *Historia Alexandri Magni (Historia de Preliis) Rezension J2 (Orosius-Rezension)*, ed. by Alfons Hilka (Meisenheim am Glan: Hain, 1976), and *History of Alexander's Battles*, trans. Pritchard, pp. 7–9.

⁷ The Pseudo-Callisthenes is so named because the text was originally attributed to Callisthenes of Olynthus (c. 360–328 BC), despite the fact that he died before Alexander and thus could not be the author. Although 'no extant version of Pseudo-Callisthenes approximates to [the] original state of the composition' (George Cary, *The Medieval Alexander*, ed. by D. J. A. Ross (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1956), p. 9) four recensions survive as a result of subsequent revision and elaboration (α, β, γ and δ), all of which are in turn derived from the α-version, which is represented by Paris, BnF, fonds grec MS 1711 and various surviving translations (Cary, pp. 9–11).

⁸ The twelfth-century *Fuerre de Gadres* relates events which occurred during the Siege of Tyre. It exists in French and Latin versions, and also forms a major component of the Arbuthnet *Buik of Alexander*. See *The Medieval French Roman d'Alexandre Volume IV: Le Roman du Fuerre de Gadres d'Eustache*, ed. by Edward C. Armstrong and Alfred Foulet, Elliott Monographs in the Romance Languages and Literatures 39 (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1942); and D. J. A. Ross, 'A New Manuscript of the Latin *Fuerre de Gadres* and the Text of *Roman d'Alexandre* Branch II', *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes*, 22 (1959), 211–53.

⁹ Existing primarily as a 'considerably altered French version of the *Iter ad Paradisum*' translated from the Latin in the thirteenth century (Cary, *The Medieval Alexander*, p. 31), the *Voyage* deals with Alexander's journey into Paradise. While it is possible that the Buik-poet simply derived these elements of the story from his copy of the *Roman d'Alexandre*, the text's preoccupation with this episode suggests that the poet may have read it independently. See *La Prise de Defur and Le Voyage d'Alexandre au Paradis Terrestre*, ed. by Lawton P. G. Peckham and Milan S. La Du, Elliott Monographs in the Romance Languages and Literatures 35 (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1935).

¹⁰ A Latin adaptation of Pseudo-Callisthenes, known to be in existence before AD 1000 (Cary, *The*

texts such as Marco Polo's *Il Milione*,¹¹ John Mandeville's *Travels*,¹² the *Secretum Secretorum*,¹³ the *Lai d'Aristote*,¹⁴ and the Scottish *De Regimine Principum*,¹⁵ *Buke of Phisnomy*¹⁶ and *Thewis of Gud Women*.¹⁷ Interestingly, the poet generally does not use English sources, preferring Older Scots, Latin or French. This may suggest a deliberate avoidance of the use of English texts in the creation of a poem that seeks to raise Alexander as a role model for Scottish knights. The *Buik*-poet is also far more likely to adjust his source material by adding to it and expanding upon existing aspects of the Alexander tradition – as seen in the provision of a name for the city of Segar, nameless in other texts, the extensive detail of the *Buik*'s description of Paradise, and the increased role of Roxane in the final section – than by deliberately altering episodes from his source material. Because there is so much original material in the finished text of the *Buik of Alexander* now extant, it is

Medieval Alexander, p. 15). See *Epistola Alexandri ad Aristotelem*, ed. by Walter W. Boer, Beiträge zur klassischen Philologie 50 (Meisenheim: Verlag Anton Hain, 1973).

¹¹ Marco Polo's *Il Milione*, or 'Travels' (c. 1298–9), is one of the best-known medieval travel narratives. See *The Travels of Marco Polo*, ed. by Manuel Komroff (New York: Liveright, 1926), pp. 30, 53.

¹² Popular medieval travel narrative in the 'Wonders of the East' tradition. See *The Defective Version of Mandeville's Travels*, ed. by M. C. Seymour, EETS, OS 319 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002).

¹³ The *Secretum* 'is supposed to have been compiled originally in Syriac during the eighth century', then translated into Arabic by the Syrian Yhanna ibn el-Batrik in AD 815 (Cary, *The Medieval Alexander*, p. 21). The original manuscript, which was in eight books, is no longer extant, but a refined and extended thirteen-book version created around 1120 does survive in two manuscripts. One version was partially translated into Latin by John of Spain for either Theophine or Tarasia, queens of Spain, around 1125, and the other was translated around 1225 by Philip of Tripoli for Archbishop Guido of Tripoli. Finally, Roger Bacon edited the Latin text of Philip of Tripoli around 1257, dividing it into four books. From this point, the *Secretum* entered the Western canon both as an Alexander text and as a political treatise, although it did not become popular until the fourteenth century. See Cary, *The Medieval Alexander*, pp. 21–2, and Steven J. Williams, *The Secret of Secrets: The Scholarly Career of a Pseudo-Aristotelian Text in the Latin Middle Ages* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2003), p. 64.

¹⁴ A light-hearted thirteenth-century *fabliau* of 579 lines, with roots in the Indian *Pañcatantra* fables and the Arabic *Kitâb al-mahâsin wal-addâd* (George Sarton, 'Aristotle and Phyllis', *Isis*, 14 (1930), 8–19 (p. 9)). See *Le Lai D'Aristote de Henri d'Andeli*, ed. by Maurice Delbouille (Paris: Belles Lettres, 1951).

¹⁵ A Scottish guide to princely conduct dating from the late 1450s or early 1460s, variously known as the *Harp*, *Ane Buke of Gude Counsall to the King* and *De Regimine Principum Bonum Consilium*. Probably intended for James II, it retained popularity as late as the 1570s (Mapstone, 'The Scots *Buke of Phisnomy*', p. 21). Mapstone suggests that *De Regimine Principum* may in fact be the 'Document of Sir Gilbert Hay' referred to in the Asloan manuscript contents list. See *The Maitland Folio Manuscript*, ed. by W. A. Craigie, 2 vols (Edinburgh: Scottish Text Society, 1919–27), I, pp. 115–25, II, pp. 72–91.

¹⁶ The Scottish *Buke of Phisnomy* is incorporated within the *Buik* as a guide allowing Alexander to 'cheis þe men with all gud properteis' (10,110) when appointing underlings. However, Mapstone suggests that the *Buke of Phisnomy* may in fact have been an advisory text written by Hay himself, inserted at this point of the story as a means both of enhancing the advisory potential of the Alexandriad and of increasing the prestige and circulation of his previous work (Mapstone, 'The Scots *Buke of Phisnomy*', p. 5).

¹⁷ Scottish conduct poem dealing with ideal behaviour for gentlewomen, dated to the mid-fifteenth century. See *Ratis Raving and Other Early Scots Poems on Morals*, ed. by R. Girvan (Edinburgh: Scottish Text Society, 1939).

more constructive to consider it as a stand-alone text rather than attempting to read it as a translation. The ways in which the author and the later copyist have knitted together the bones of the tale furnished by the medieval Alexander tradition and the substantial extra flesh that they have chosen to put on them reveal a great deal about the preoccupations of both the author/translator and his mid-fifteenth-century audience.

While John Cartwright identifies the *Buik*'s revival of the Alexander tradition as 'a last and intelligent stand against the combined forces of historical criticism and anti-chivalric cynicism',¹⁸ the text can alternatively be seen as a continuation and reinforcement of political concerns which had a particular resonance in Scotland, with a particular emphasis on the connections between knighthood and kingship and the duty of worthy conduct that a king or lord owes to those in his care, as well as the legitimacy of minority kingship. Some of these concerns had already been established in Barbour's *Bruce* (c. 1375) in the fourteenth century, and were carried into the fifteenth in texts such as Hay's *Buke of Knychthede* (c. 1456) and the anonymous *Golagros and Gawane* (c. 1475–1500) and *Lancelot of the Laik* (c. 1475–1500). In a Scottish context, 'anti-chivalric cynicism' would not in fact seriously penetrate portrayals of knighthood until the appearance of Dunbar, some forty years after the original composition of the *Buik*. While it is more plausible to suggest that the *Buik*'s author might have been reacting against cynicism in continental or English portrayals of chivalry, it is still perfectly possible to read the text on its own terms as simply using the established Alexander tradition to create and/or revive a knightly and royal role model.

The Erskine connection further suggests that the *Buik* was not produced in a courtly context, but in a relatively remote north-eastern noble house. Despite its use of Alexander's rule as a framework through which to explore ideal male behaviour it is, as the poet himself states, 'not compyllit' only for 'kingis and princeis and lordis that ar mychttie' but for 'all men that richteouslie wald life' (19,275–7). It is likely that the *Buik*'s particular preoccupations with remoteness, borders and the perceived 'edges of civilization' may have been designed specifically to appeal to Thomas Erskine and his household.¹⁹ Dwelling on the Highland fringes and in conflict with the Crown in an ongoing debate over possession of the estate of Mar, the Erskines may very well have felt a strong sympathy with Alexander's difficulties with grasping monarchs in the second section, and strange and unruly wild men in the third. Certainly the *Buik* takes great care to emphasize and even expand upon these two elements of the Alexander tradition, while also speaking to a more general medieval Scottish sense of cultural marginalization from Europe in the youthful Alexander's status as an outsider at the beginning of his career. The *Buik* can then be seen to use Alexander's position as conqueror and king to suggest the possibility of triumph over such marginalization. Similarly, although the *Buik* was

¹⁸ John Cartwright, 'Sir Gilbert Hay and the Alexander Tradition', in *Scottish Language and Literature, Medieval and Renaissance: Fourth International Conference 1984 – Proceedings*, ed. by Dieter Strauss and Horst W. Drescher (Frankfurt: Peter Lang, 1986), pp. 229–39 (pp. 236–7).

¹⁹ Martin, 'Of Wisdome', p. 87.

not written for the king, its sympathetic portrayal of Alexander's and Solomon's coming to power at young ages, and its condemnation of those who would denigrate Alexander for his youth, evoke the protracted periods of minority kingship which Scotland experienced under the Stewart kings, five of whom (James II, James III, James IV, James V and James VI) ascended the throne as minors. A central theme of the earliest section of the poem is the image of Alexander as an unnaturally wise *puer senex*, conducting himself in a manner that is both appropriate to and deserving of kingship, and indeed in a manner superior to that of the older men who claim kingship for themselves, as I will further discuss below.

Cartwright also suggests that the *Buik* may be read as a merging of the romance and advice-to-princes genres, with Alexander simultaneously embodying 'the brave and open-handed conqueror' of the romance *Alexander* tradition, 'and on the other hand the thoughtful ruler addressed in the *Secretum Secretorum*'.²⁰ While this is a useful way to view the *Buik of Alexander*, an alternative analysis is possible. On close examination, it can be seen that the *Buik* presents its advice on leadership and warrior conduct through the framework of four separate and distinct sub-genres, effectively exploiting the romance form to span a number of different styles of writing. Although the sub-genres frequently shade into one another, and anomalous phrases and events can be found in each section, this four-part division throws some new light on the narrative structure, as well as the complex genre identity, of the *Buik*.

The first section of the text, running from its commencement to around line 7000, focuses upon Alexander's birth, his early education and his arrival as a warrior king, and concludes with his defeat of Dares and assumption of the older man's kingdom.²¹ After its initial engagement with magic surrounding the circumstances of Alexander's birth, this section is primarily concerned with battle strategy and knightly conduct, which are described in a highly realistic fashion that often stands in sharp contrast to much of the rest of the text. It is also concerned with establishing Alexander as a role model for both knights and princes. The poem illustrates some of the ways in which a young warrior ideally sets about establishing himself as a figure of chivalric prowess and honour, as Alexander demonstrates his physical strength and ability as well as his courage in attacking Nicholas and later Dares, his great nobility in restoring Samson to the kingdom from which he has been 'wranguslie dishereist' (990), and his independence in establishing his own rulership. This section is reminiscent of the earlier Scottish narrative epics the *Bruce* and the *Wallace* (c. 1471–8) which deal with similar themes of warrior prowess, effective leadership and rectitude in battle, all of which suggests that addressing these characteristics with a strong sense of realism was important to Scottish audiences.

²⁰ Cartwright, 'Sir Gilbert Hay', p. 230.

²¹ In this section, the poet appears to be drawing primarily upon his basic sources, the *Historia de Preliis*, the *Roman d'Alexandre* and the French *Prose Alexander* (itself a descendant of the *Historia de Preliis*), with embellishments derived from his own military experience.

Throughout his career as a *makar* and translator, Hay often appears to draw on his own experiences as a knight in France in or around the 1430s. The influence of this time is apparent in his 1456 translations of *The Buke of the Law of Armys*, *The Buke of the Ordre of Knychthede* and *The Buke of the Gouvernaunce of Princis*.²² A similar influence is apparent in this section, in the poem's detailed and analytical accounts of battle strategy, often from an evidently 'soldier's eye' viewpoint. Alexander is shown carefully assembling his host and assigning 'in euerie wing [...] chiftantis tua / Gif ony case hapnit till ane of tha / The tothir suld be reddie to supplie' (1177–9), and organizing his force into 'þe vangard and þe wingis and flycht' (1747). Cartwright's suggestion that the author attempts to 're-assess and re-establish knighthood as a practical and accessible way of life' appears to address this focus on military practice.²³ However, the extent to which the institution of knighthood required 're-establishing' in 1460s Scotland is questionable, particularly given the production of the *Buke of the Ordre of Knychthede* only a few years previously. It seems more likely that, at least when the text was first drafted, the practicality of the *Buik of King Alexander* instead reflected the down-to-earth strain that continued relatively undiminished in mid-fifteenth-century Scottish literature of chivalry. The motives of the 1499 redactor are more likely to have included some sense of the necessity of reviving the more practical aspects of Scottish chivalry, given the excesses of the courtly culture sponsored by James IV, but this too is questionable in view of the undoubtedly practical – if not always *practicable* – commitment to chivalry held by the monarch up until the battle of Flodden.

However, this section's portrayal of Alexander's knightly behaviour also draws upon continental romance tradition, particularly the *Roman d'Alexandre*, as seen in the text's great emphasis on Alexander's chivalrous mercy. This mercy is bestowed on both the innocent – such as Dares's wives and daughters – and the not-so-innocent, including Philip after his rejection of Olympia, and Dares himself. As Martin observes, at least some of this display of chivalrous mercy appears to be unique to this version of the story: 'much of the counsel that [Alexander] offers [his enemies] with "ane mesure an a sobernes" is the invention of the Scottish poet'.²⁴ This reflects a greater emphasis on forgiveness in romance-derived Scottish chivalric poems, such as as *Rauf Coilyear* (late fifteenth century) and *Golagros and Gawane* (c. 1475–1500), in comparison with the lack of forgiveness modelled in the *Wallace*.²⁵ Such forgiveness, particularly in the context of the clan system and its incorporation into the medieval social structures of church and state, would surely have been a socially necessary quality in fifteenth-century Scotland. The clan system and the close-knit nature of the Scottish nobility at this

²² Cartwright, 'Sir Gilbert Hay', p. 234.

²³ Ibid., p. 230.

²⁴ Martin, 'Of Wisdome', p. 79.

²⁵ Forgiveness of one's knightly enemies, and their reintegration into the group identity of the brotherhood of knights, is evident in other Scottish texts that incorporate elements of the romance tradition, but is less prominent in texts less influenced by romance, particularly Hary's *Wallace* and Douglas's *Eneados* (1513).

time tended to necessitate tight cultural control of the circumstances under which revenge could be exacted.²⁶ This required a culture of forgiveness among physically and socially powerful males which is instructively demonstrated in Alexander's own emphasis on the importance of mercy. On a darker note, Alexander's giving of counsel with 'sobernes' may also be read as a display of dominance over his defeated enemies. Deprived of the opportunity to gloat over his fallen foes by the rules of chivalry, Alexander nonetheless finds a way to establish his mastery over them by giving advice to the vanquished, who must in turn listen shamefacedly.

A unique aspect of the *Buik* also makes its first appearance in this section of the poem: the concept of epistolary warfare, a notion that at first appears at odds with the continental romance tradition's prioritization of tournaments and battles as a means of winning status. The use of letters in the Alexander story was already established, as it was an integral part of the Pseudo-Callisthenes tradition and forms the basis of the *Epistola Alexandri ad Aristotelem*. However, the *Buik*'s rendering of the story makes an especially strong connection between Alexander's letter-writing and his conduct and prowess as a warrior. Particularly in the period when Alexander and Dares are posturing before fighting each other, the author uses his hero's skill in writing aggressive letters to stand in for his skill as a fighter. At one point in the first section, Dares specifically polarizes the categories of 'child' and 'man' by using Alexander's youth to taunt him as the two prepare for battle in lines 4295–350, sending him 'a playing ball, / And ane golf-staff to driff the ball withall, / As barnis dois in cieteis for to play' (4326–8) and advising him to 'pas hame þai way / And sulk ane quhile apoun þai moderis kne' (4329–30). This insulting and degrading assertion of the unsuitability of young men for leadership, when placed in the mouth of the obvious villain of the first section of the book, can in fact be read as a spirited attack against those who would denigrate the idea of minority kingship – a concern that was rarely far from the minds of Scottish nobles during the reign of the Stewart kings. However, Alexander's quick intellect and sharp tongue rapidly turn the insult into a badge of knighthood and a sign of his own imminent ascendancy over the older king: the toy golf ball, he replies, represents Dares's empire, the golf club his staff of rulership, and 'as the ball it cachis to and fra / Sa sall ye at my bidding cum and ga' (4444–5). This demonstrates the two warriors' sophisticated grasp of symbolism and rhetoric, as well as a mastery of invective and insult that can only be described as genuine Scottish-style flyting. This textual aggression raises epistolary combat to a level of seriousness similar to the depiction of hand-to-hand combat or jousting in a traditional romance. Earlier in the text, this exchange of written disagreements also takes place with Nicholas, and it occurs again in a later section with Pallissida and Dindimus. Although epistolary combat, much like duelling and tourneying, is still presented primarily as a precursor to the main event that takes place in a massed battle or a face-to-face confrontation, it appears that, within the *Buik*,

²⁶ For further information on social ties and 'the feud, both in its bloody form and its judicial processes' in late medieval Scotland, see Jenny Wormald, *Lords and Men in Scotland: Bonds of Manrent, 1442–1603* (Edinburgh: John Donald, 1985), p. 5.

to fight with pens is seen as a legitimate form of masculine display of strength, physical wealth and resources, and power. This equation of literary and physical prowess may arguably be considered further evidence for the authorship of Hay, himself relatively unusual among Scottish *makars* in his position as both a scholar and an experienced knight.

The first section of the text aims further to establish Alexander as a role model for Christian knights by attempting to separate him as far as possible from his pre-Christian origins. Although Alexander is himself ostensibly the son of a god, the *Buik* seeks to monotheize its hero's expressions and thoughts: while characters such as Philip may speak about 'the goddis' (36), Alexander usually refers to 'Goddis grace' (824) and 'God in His hie maiestie' (7013) and Aristotle too knows that

[a]ll þir goddis and mawmentis was bot deuilrie,
And þat þair was bot ane God anerlie,
Quhill spirituall was, nother mettell, stane, nor tre,
Bot inuisibill in His diuinitie

(lines 425–7)

teaching his pupil 'to nocht trow in na goddis þat I se, / Nowther son na mone, nor zitt planete na sternis, / Bot in God invisibill þat in all thing governis' (14,051–3). The poem also seeks to place the action between the Fall and the coming of Christ, having a character announce that a particular tree has 'never sen Adam synnyt burgioun bare, / Na neuer sall bare quhill ane madyn bare ane childe' (13,486–7). This refers to the Dry Tree, a recurring topos in both the medieval Alexander tradition and in poems such as *Huon de Bordeaux*, *Octavian* and *Boeve de Haumtone*, while also repositioning the narrative within the context of the Old and New Testaments by gesturing forward in time to Christ's birth.²⁷ This monotheization of Alexander is part of a greater trend throughout the text; as Cartwright points out, for much of the narrative Alexander's culture is 'barely distinguishable from that of the narrator/author'.²⁸ The poet also brings Alexander closer to Christianity in the *Buik*'s repudiation of elements of paganism specifically coded as Muslim, particularly in the section of the text dealing with Segar. In this episode, he uses the character of Alexander explicitly to condemn 'Mahovin' and his followers, who sacrifice animals and are 'beistlie folkis, withoutin ressoun / Creuell cuvatus, and full of tressoun' (11,369–70).²⁹ This condemnation seems designed to appeal to the still smouldering embers of Scottish crusading sentiment that would later flare back into life during the reign of James IV, as well as (possibly) addressing cultural

²⁷ See Smithers' commentary to line 6755 of Oxford, Bodleian Library, Laud misc. MS 622 in his edition: *King Alisaunder*, ed. by G. V. Smithers, 2 vols, EETS, ES 227, 237 (London: Oxford University Press, 1952, 1957), II, p. 146.

²⁸ John Cartwright, 'Basilisks, Brahmins and Other Aliens: Encountering the Other in Sir Gilbert Hay's *Alexander*', *Studies in Scottish Literature*, 26 (1991), 334–42 (p. 338).

²⁹ Deborah E. Van Duin, '“Na Man Micht Nounber þe Riches”: The City of Segar in Sir Gilbert Hay's *Buik of King Alexander*', *English Studies*, 77 (1996), 517–29 (pp. 521–2).

anxieties, more European than Scottish, surrounding the fall of Constantinople in 1453.³⁰

However, it is worth noting at this point that material in the later sections of the *Buik* will work to compromise the ability of the whole text to operate as a mirror for princes. The poet's initial assertion is confident:

[q]uha wald haue honour, conquest, or victorie,
Wirschip, hie vassaleg, or chaulrie,
Thame neidis nane vther teching na doctour
Bot þis storie to be to þame mirroure.

(lines 268–71)

However, the influence of tragedy later in the text will destabilize this belief when Alexander's decline and death are described and the role of fate in his initial successes is revealed, making him a more problematic exemplum. The poet claims that the entire *Buik* can be used as advice literature:

Þis buk schawis not allanerlie
the worthe deidis of men þat war worthie
bot schawis þe wayis of virtue and valiance
rycht reull and ordour of kingis gouernance.

(lines 2055–8)

But the text's mixing of material from different sources seems to problematize this alleged identity, leaving its claim truly legitimate only for the first section. This may reflect the fact that the poem was probably intended for the non-royal Erskine family rather than for James II, thus rendering it a mirror for knights rather than a mirror for princes – or it may simply demonstrate the unique problems associated with the poet's attempt to distil a single Alexander narrative from a bewildering variety of sources.

The second section of the text, encompassing approximately lines 7000–9000, is devoted to courtliness and love.³¹ Gerrit Bunt claims that '[t]he world that we enter in medieval stories about Alexander the Great is a largely masculine one of war [...]. Women play a role in this world, but it is a minor and mostly marginal one'; and for many other Alexander romances and, indeed, the other parts of the *Buik*, this is true.³² Lines 7000–9000, however, are most concerned with

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ The *Buik*-poet's use of sources becomes more complex here. While the 'Court of Love in Hay's *Buik* is based upon the Court of Love which occurs within the branch of the French *Roman d'Alixandre* known as *Les Vœux du Paon*' (Kathryn Saldanha, 'The Thewis of Gudwomen: Middle Scots Moral Advice with European Connections?', in *The European Sun: Proceedings of the Seventh International Conference on Medieval and Renaissance Scottish Language and Literature*, ed. by Graham Caie et al. (East Linton: Tuckwell, 2001), pp. 288–300 (p. 295)), the section's description of ideal female behaviour draws upon the fifteenth-century Scottish *Thewis of Gud Women*, and the destabilizing 'Bridling of Aristotle' episode at the beginning of the section is taken from the *Lai d'Aristote*.

³² Gerrit H. V. Bunt, 'A Wife There Was for Alexander the Great', in *A Wyf Ther Was: Essays in Honour of Paule Mertens-Fonck*, ed. by Juliette Dor (Liège: Université de Liège, 1992), pp. 41–8 (p. 42).

women and their behaviour, whether idealized or criticized, and with interaction between men and women in the mould of courtly romance. Unlike the women who appear in the third section of the text, the female characters in this section most commonly embody what may be described as the female Same rather than the female Other: they are women who work with the hero and help him achieve his goals, without usurping his authority or offending his ego. In contrast with the first part of the text, much of this second section appears to be drawn directly from external sources, particularly the material dealing with ideal behaviour for women involved in courtly love. As already noted, the entire premise of the Court of Love is derived from *Les Vœux du Paon*; the making of Cassamus's vow of protection to Ydory at line 8187 in particular demonstrates many of the typical tropes of *fin amors*, including maidenly blushes ('scho wex all rede, and lukit down', 8190), the love-debate, the pairing-up of a number of couples, and prayers to 'Cupid, god of lufe' (8198), all of which forms a significant departure from the first section's masculine and military focus.³³ The text's previous world of battle, strategy, homo-social friendship and physical and verbal aggression is all but forgotten in favour of vows of love, love-debates such as the question of 'quheder guidis or fairnes / Is to luffiaris mare comfort and blythnes' (8222–3) and discussions of the seven tokens of faithful love (8283–322).

This section is also significant in that it is the one part of the text in which Alexander himself does not take a leading role. While the young men of Alexander's court 'all thus to Venus chalmer haue [...] gane' (7953), immersing themselves in the trappings of courtly love in a way that seems as much about the public display of one's status as courtly lover for the benefit of other men as it is about attracting the attentions of women, Alexander stands apart, refusing to be directly involved in the action. Instead, he finds satisfaction for his own amatory desires in solo episodes both earlier and later in the text, episodes that are, for the most part, distinguished by their utter *uncourtliness*, including his no-nonsense political marriage to Roxane, his relatively casual sexual engagement with Candace, and the horrifying spectacle of his encounter with the Poisoned Maiden. As the *Buik's* hero is already a general, a conqueror and the ruler of 'all þe lordis and knychtis of þat cuntre' (2015), the poet seems to feel no need to depict him as 'King of Lufe' (7957) or to allow him to participate in the collective frenzy of love-related activity and debate that dominates this section of the text. Indeed, as the flowery speeches and extravagant promises of the male characters and the dominant presence of female characters such as Ydory and Pheyonas show, the 'honour' of participating in the Court of Love is in fact a rather feminizing experience, and reduces the power of men such as Betyes, who departs from the text after Alexander leaves the court in search of adventure. It is possible that the entire sequence is included more from a sense of textual duty, a belief that some treatment of courtly love is necessary for the proper completion of a romance, than from any actual desire to include it, thus explaining the poet's dissociation of his hero Alexander from this section of the text. However, this section can also be read as having been

³³ Saldanha, 'The Thewis of Gudwomen', p. 295.

deliberately inserted to highlight Alexander's detachment from the romantic, even feminine, concerns of lesser men in favour of his devotion, at this stage of the text at least, to the loftier ideals of conquest and kingship.

One somewhat discordant note at the beginning of the second section is the introduction of the 'Bridling of Aristotle' at lines 7163–248, when Alexander's teacher falls in love with a beautiful young woman and is subsequently humiliated by her. The inclusion of this story in a text that generally regards the wisdom of Aristotle as a serious and beneficial influence on Alexander's life is somewhat curious, and may indicate that the story from the *Lai d'Aristote* was added by the 1499 copyist rather than by the original *Buik*-poet himself. Alternatively, however, the positioning of the bridling of Aristotle immediately before the 'King of Lufe' (7957) material may be read as an ironic comment by the original *Buik*-poet on the flowery treatment of courtly love that is to follow. Although the poet feels compelled to include the Court of Love as a necessary part of the romance that he is, in part, trying to write, he destabilizes it by prefacing it with a lewd, indeed *fabliau*-esque, depiction of the dangers of and potential for dishonour inherent in sexual love.

Interestingly, while the rest of the text is more strongly concerned with creating and positing ideals of *male* behaviour, this section also includes a description of ideal gender roles for women, as seen when the prescribed behaviour for women rejecting suitors is briefly described (lines 8350–81). However, as Mapstone points out, lines 8478–588 in this section incorporate a near-verbatim transcription of the Scottish advice-to-ladies poem the *Thewis of Gud Women*, detailing the behaviours and characteristics expected of the virtuous lady.³⁴ To some degree, this inclusion serves to balance the information about ideal male behaviour that the text has already furnished in lines 1–7000. However, it is significant that in commenting on women's ideal behaviour the author finds it necessary to draw on an external text. This is particularly pertinent when it is considered in light of the other moments in the *Buik* when an external, non-Alexander-related piece of writing is incorporated wholesale into the text, most noticeably in the inclusion of the *Buke of Phisnomy* (lines 10,108–555) in the third section of the text. The *Phisnomy* section details ways in which the monarch or lesser leader can use his judgement of physical characteristics successfully to choose the best underlings and servants. This presents an interesting contrast with the first section, in which the poet comfortably furnishes his own descriptions of battle tactics and ideals for knightly and chivalrous conduct. In the second and third sections, however, he incorporates external writing when dealing with ideals of behaviour meant for women and underlings. It seems that the poet is confident that knighthood and chivalry are indeed his areas of expertise, thus leading to his free adaptation of and addition to the existing Alexander materials earlier in the poem. However, he evidently feels on less certain ground when dealing with those whose lives are spent outside the sphere of knighthood, and thus incorporates more material from external texts, and does so more faithfully than when he is dealing with knighthood, an area in

³⁴ Mapstone, 'The Scots *Buke of Phisnomy*', pp. 19–20.

which he apparently feels more free to adapt and alter his source material. This has the interesting side effect of rendering the poet's use of the *Thewis* and the *Phisnomy* more identifiable than the poet's many borrowings from various threads of the Alexander tradition.

The third and longest section of the text (approximately lines 9200–17385) follows the pattern of the quest-driven romance, but exploits the format by incorporating elements of medieval travel writing and tales of the exotic East.³⁵ These additions are not unique to the *Buik*, as the incorporation of material dealing with the 'Wonders of the East' is demonstrated in much earlier romances such as the *Roman de toute chevalerie* (Anglo-Norman *Alexander*) and *Le Voyage d'Alexandre au paradis terrestre*, as well as the *Epistola Alexandri ad Aristotelem*.³⁶ However, the contrast in the tone and style of the writing is particularly sharp at this juncture, as Alexander abruptly 'his leife at ladyis tane' and departs 'for mony an vther castell and cuntrie' (9269–75). It is difficult to avoid the impression that Alexander's journey has been deliberately inserted into the narrative at this point to move the text away from love debates and back into the realm of adventure – ironically, the exotic unknown appears to be safer and more familiar to the poet than the world of courtly love. Throughout lines 10,000–11,000, elements such as palaces, treasures and tribes enacting strange customs are increasingly introduced, and the territory of the Exotic East is truly reached at line 11,560, when 'vnicornes, serpentis and liouns' appear. The book's acceptance, and even promotion, of the fabulous again presents a strong contrast with its realistic focus in lines 1–7000, and its emphasis on the courtly and amatory in lines 7000–9200. The portrayal of monsters, particularly human and humanoid ones such as 'þe poysond madyn' (rubric above line 9269), the 'wodwiz', or wild men, 'without clething, all coverit oure with hare' (11,438–40), and the 'beistlike men' who 'ette flesch [...] off best and man' (10,711–15) draws heavily on the 'Wonders of the East' tradition and its previous incorporations into the Alexander legend, as do descriptions of fabulous places, such as Porrus's palace, so well-stocked with marvels and 'with pretious

³⁵ Again, a wide variety of sources are discernible in the third section of the poem. Cartwright concludes that the *Buik*-poet's 'main source for this episode was the *Voyage [d'Alexandre au paradis terrestre]*, either as a separate work or, quite probably, as an interpolation into the *Roman d'Alexandre*' (John Cartwright, 'Sir Gilbert Hay's *Alexander*: A Study in Transformations', *Medium Ævum*, 60 (1991), 61–72 (p. 70)), while the influence of the *Epistola Alexandri ad Aristotelem* in the written exchanges between Alexander and Aristotle is also apparent. However, the poem also incorporates a large amount of non-Alexander material, including aspects of Marco Polo's *Il Milione*, probably the Latin version by Francesco Pipino (Van Duin, 'Na Man Micht Noumer þe Riches', p. 526); the *Secretum Secretorum*, which provides (among other points) the 'Poisoned Maiden' episode; and the Older Scots *Buke of Phisnomy*, which was more or less directly inserted into the text at lines 10,108–555. This section of the poem shares characteristics with many earlier Alexandriads which portrayed the 'Exotic East' for entertainment, and shows some particularly close parallels – its departure from the traditional portrayal of Candace as an evil seductress, for example, is also seen in Thomas of Kent's twelfth-century *Roman de toute chevalerie*, although there is no other textual evidence to suggest that the *Buik*-poet used this text as a source, as far as I am aware.

³⁶ Cartwright, 'Basilisks', p. 334.

stanis of Orient' (11,293) that 'in þis erde I traist þat day was nocht / Sa riche a place, and plesand vnto luke' (11,132–3).

This part of the *Buik* is not only the longest section of the text: it is also clear that the poet regards it as more interesting than the other sections. This is seen towards the end of the second section, when he interrupts his description of a battle to explain that he is cutting his account short in order to skip to Alexander's more unusual adventures: 'Suppois I wrett nocht all thing þat I se / In thing that was translatit forrow me, / It rekkis nocht, for men that knawis it wele [...] / And of materis that strange ar and vnkynd, / [I will] Leif no-thing, bot write fro end to end' (6031–8). This suggests that the poet is himself more interested in writing Alexander's explorations and conquests among the 'Wonders of the East' 'fro end to end', an interest that appears to be borne out in the generally more detailed and engaging nature of the writing in this section. It is possible that the poet is trying to promote his text in one of the slower passages by suggesting to the potentially flagging reader that the imminent appearance of exotic peoples and monsters – including figures such as the Poisoned Maiden, who is derived from the *Secretum Secretorum* and does not appear in other Alexander romances as far as I am aware – makes this Alexandriad unique, a novel account that even 'men that knawis' the story of Alexander from his famous role in Scottish literature as one of the Nine Worthies, may enjoy. As suggested above, this emphasis may also imply the Erskine family's interest in the idea of living at the edges of civilization, yet triumphing over the 'wildness' that surrounds them with orderly and masterful chivalrous behaviour.

As in the first section, elements of advice writing and the epic are also incorporated, although this is often less successful than earlier in the poem. When Alexander travels in *Le Voyage d'Alexandre au paradis terrestre*, he is advised by Aristotle: however, in the *Buik* Aristotle returns to Greece at line 10,556, allowing the poet subsequently to incorporate his advice in the guise of letters to Alexander from his former tutor 'off documentis and teichtingis of before, / To kepe him fra all vanetie and glorie' (17,628–9).³⁷ This adds to the poem's overt concern with providing advice for kings and leaders, but the extent to which Aristotle's advice is drawn from the *Secretum Secretorum* also detracts from the degree to which we see the poet himself as knowledgeable about kingship, as the incorporation of secondary sources in other parts of the *Buik* seems to suggest a lack of confidence in his own ability to speak about the subjects under discussion.

However, when the hero's death is prophesied at line 13,610, the text's tone abruptly changes. Not only is Alexander doomed to die 'richt soiddantly' at a young age, but he is to be betrayed by the man he most trusted (13,610–16). The threat of his own death seriously disrupts Alexander's former fearless adventurousness, so much so that he retreats into an almost infantile state, crying for his mother and his teacher:

Quhat will my moder say, Olimpias,
Quhilk mony ane thousand tymes will say, 'Allace!'

³⁷ Cartwright, 'Sir Gilbert Hay's *Alexander*', p. 67.

Caughey: 'Als for the worthynes of þe romance'

[...]

Quhat will my maister Arestotill say?
I was nevir vele sen þat he past away –
Quhill I had him, I had na dred of dede;
He is now sa fer, he may sett na remede.

(lines 13,685–94)

This moment points to the final section of the poem, when Alexander's kingdom will be plunged into tragedy with his death. For now, though, the darkness is broken when the sparring between Alexander and Porrus is resumed at line 13,703, as Alexander is forced to mask his shock by answering Porrus's jibes 'with fengzeit countenance / And of blyithnes pressit him to mak semblance' (13,717–18). However, Alexander's position as conquering hero is increasingly challenged, particularly when his attempt to breach the gates of Paradise goes awry. Insisting that 'Gif I suld leif for drede of beistis wylde / For hete, for hunger, or for craggis hie [...] Than war I nocht of all erde conquestuore' (16,064–7), Alexander marches on the 'landis of Terre de Dee' (16,001) with a select group of men, equipped with both a ship and 'ane hundreth oliphantis' (16,089). Yet when he arrives at the gates of Paradise by river, Alexander and his men see that 'þe wallis [are] richt hie' (16,214), and contain 'nowther porte na postrum na entre' (16,224). Despite his best efforts, Alexander is not admitted – although the waters rise, allowing his ship to be lifted up to the battlements of the wall so that he may view 'the regioun þat was fare' (16,259), he progresses no further. His shouted demands for 'tribute to þe emprioure' (16,294) are met by 'ane angell' (16,296) who presents him with the gift of a mysterious apple, then firmly bids him farewell and tells him that 'thow sall nowther cum into þis place' (16,302). The waters fall, making the walls inaccessible once more, and Alexander rejoins the rest of his company, who praise him in extravagant terms: 'þow art hale emprioure / Off all þis erde, sen we haue suth knowlege / That Paradise hes zeldit þe trewage' (16,313–15). Yet the nature of this 'trewage' is later revealed when the apple's riddle is decoded at lines 17,845–71. The 'gift' in fact symbolizes the hollowness of Alexander's project of conquest: although 'all this warld mycht neuer suffice þe', soon 'þi lenth of erde sall þe suffice' (17,867–9).

As this episode suggests, the poem's final section, which runs from approximately line 17,385 to the end of the poem, takes on a decidedly tragic tone when dealing with Alexander's inevitable betrayal and death. Although the shortest part of the book, this section provides a necessary appendix to the rest of the story, helping to reconcile the tales of Alexander's glorious empire with the condition of the modern world as the poet and his readers find it. It also adds the element of *memento mori* typically coupled with the life story of a secular hero in the Middle Ages, and touches upon the late medieval tradition of 'fall literature', more frequently associated with stories of Troy.

The *Buik* has so far exploited the romance genre to construct Alexander as an ideal commander and military tactician, a benevolent watcher over the cult of courtly love, a triumphant explorer and conqueror *and* an example of the perfect

ruler. All of these images, however, are about to be abruptly and permanently undermined – the final act is a tragedy.³⁸ The fourth section of the text reveals Alexander's hubris and the uncontrolled nature of his desire for conquest, as seen in his bold declaration in the third section that he is 'sa sikker of þir goddis all, / That gouernis me þat I sall neuer fall' (15,471–2). Although this apparently dangerous and pagan arrogance becomes visible only in this final section, we now realize in hindsight that throughout the poem, and particularly in the third section, the poet has been struggling to present Alexander's drive to conquer as another aspect of his self-mastery, rather than a merely selfish desire to possess more territory.

The project of conquest might be expected to be presented as a glorious one in medieval Alexander narratives, but it is sharply criticized twice in the *Buik*. First, Dindimus explains the negative side of conquest to Alexander during their debate: he suggests that Alexander is *not* a glorious conqueror, but a thoughtless man who has caused much unnecessary conflict and death in the service of his own advancement: 'mony gude man hes slane, / Quhilkis þow may neuer bring to þe live agane; / Thow makis discorde amange þir regiouns all' (12,888–90). Second, in the episode of 'the reiffare of the sey' (17,729) Alexander meets a condemned pirate who points out that the conqueror's actions are as reprehensible as his own: 'For reif has brocht the sa grete honoure / That of þis erde thow art hale emprioure' (17,748–9), a conclusion with which the king is forced to agree: he 'knew him-selff was culpabil in þe dede' (17,784).

However, the possibility of Alexander's being seen as grasping or avaricious has been a source of anxiety far earlier in the poem, particularly in lines 10,000–11,000, where the writing dwells somewhat reluctantly on the 'grete riches' (10,673) that he takes, or wants to take, from others. Although, as Martin points out, the text insists upon the benevolence of Alexander's conquests, and has the hero himself announce that 'I bid nocht zoure tressoure / I desire bot zoure lufe and zoure favoure' (12,539–40), this rings somewhat hollow, particularly as only twenty-three

³⁸ Sources for the final section of the text, aside from the poem's 'basic sources' (see above, pp. 140–2), are more difficult to discern. Gerrit Bunt suggests that 'despite the ample attention that Alexander's career received from medieval English poets and prose-writers, treatments of his last days are relatively scarce' in insular texts (G. H. V. Bunt, 'Alexander's Last Days in the Middle English *Kyng Alisaunder*', in *Alexander the Great: Ten Studies on the Last Days of Alexander in Literary and Historical Writing*, ed. by W. J. Aerts, Jos. M. M. Hermans and Elizabeth Visser (Nijmegen: Alfa, 1978), pp. 202–25 (p. 202)). This, together with the fact that the fourth section is much shorter than the other three, suggests that the final part of the poem, like the first, incorporates more of the poet's original work. Here it is worth noting the generally erratic perception of 'tragedy' in English literature of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries (for details, see Henry Ansgar Kelly, *Ideas and Forms of Tragedy from Aristotle to the Middle Ages* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), pp. 170–1). While Chaucer uses the word 'tragedye' in his *Troilus and Criseyde* (*The Riverside Chaucer*, general editor Larry D. Benson (Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin, 1987), p. 584 (book V, line 1786)), it is likely that he did not use the term in its Aristotelian sense. However, if the *Buik*-poet is indeed Gilbert Hay, who spent a significant proportion of his adult life in France and served as Chamberlain to King Charles VII, he may well have encountered a more traditionally Aristotelian concept of tragedy in French or Latin writing, or even in the Italian authors who, by the end of the fourteenth century, had begun 'deliberately [to take] a neoclassicist attitude towards tragedy' (Kelly, p. 185).

lines later the narrator returns to commenting on the 'grete riches' (12,563) of Alexander's conquests and the 'grete giftis' (12,568) that he receives. This problematization of conquest is a deeply unsettling inclusion that may reflect residual Scottish emotions about the threat of English conquest, as well as possible Erskine concerns about overly interventionist kingship. As another tactic to counteract this, the poet has provided extensive discussion of the treasure-loving and highly materialistic nature of other kings, especially Porrus. Just as the text emphasizes Dares's violent temper in order to highlight Alexander's relative calmness, and Philip's cowardice to show Alexander's bravery, this emphasis deflects attention away from Alexander's own desire to seize more property and territory, and differentiates his laudable ambition to seize territory and bring 'civilization' to strange tribes from Porrus's contemptible greed to possess fabulous palaces and objects.

Alexander's encounters with other cultures also have the effect of progressively undermining the text's earlier claims regarding his graciousness, generosity and mercy. Previously, the poet had been able to minimize Alexander's overly dominant behaviour because it has frequently been directed towards outsiders – Amazons of the 'land of Femyne' (11,714), homosexual cannibals who 'mete togidder as wemen dois with men' (10,718), 'gyandis' (16,330), men with 'hedis like doggis' and 'swyne' (16,324) and other 'ill pepill' (16,338). Now, however, his attempts to defend his way of life against the counter-examples provided by the eloquent Dindimus and Diogenes begin to be less convincing. Another technique that the *Buik* employs to deflect textual anxiety about Alexander's relationship to material goods is to place repeated emphasis on his generous giving to others, such as Samson, his lords, the tribes that he conquers, and even the fallen Dares. The poet also introduces a new element in an attempt to justify Alexander's quest for Paradise: it is framed as 'ane prophecy that [a bishop of Jerusalem] haue lang time helit' (4663), adding an extra note of inevitability to what has become a (relatively) modest pursuit of mastery, rather than an arrogant quest for total possession of Paradise.

By the fourth section of the text, however, these excuses have fallen away. Alexander's generosity can no longer counterbalance his arrogance and avarice. This difficulty is openly signalled with the entrance of Diogenes, whose presence introduces a shift towards deeper matters of philosophy, destiny and the soul as he attacks Alexander's life and achievements, dismissing his career as vainglorious, overly violent, and concerned only with the acquisition of 'the gold [...] quhill þow luffis attoure all thing' (17,695). Despite being pagan, Diogenes is described as 'of perfite liffe' (17,663) and can be read as a prophet-like character who introduces elements of quasi-Christian philosophy befitting the contemplation of mortality. As he reminds Alexander, 'thow art suggestt to my seruitoure' (17,692). This is intended to remind the king of the primacy of spirituality and the transience of the worldly possessions and fame that he has obsessively pursued. The focus of the text is thus abruptly switched to 'God and iustice' (17,712) rather than treasure, adventure and 'wardly gouernying' (17,649); Diogenes even goes so far as to warn Alexander of the afterlife, where he will be forced to 'gif reknyning' (17,709) for all the people he has wronged.

This thematic shift is further mirrored in the conversation with the pirate described above, and with Alexander's admission of his own guilt. The predicted 'reknyning' has come even earlier than expected, and Alexander is indeed unable satisfactorily to account for the deeds which had appeared so glorious in the third section of the poem. This moment evokes the 'resolutely anti-imperialistic'³⁹ tradition of medieval fall literature, as embodied in texts such as Lydgate's *Siege of Thebes* (c. 1420–2). Fall literature both laments and expresses the inevitability of the collapse and destruction of 'kings and empires', as we see in this section.⁴⁰ This episode also suggests that in the new tragic mode successes in battle, love and conquest, the highest and most valuable achievements in the earlier sections of the book, are no longer adequate. In fact, they serve merely to highlight the tragic nature of Alexander's fall, as the plot provides an apt example 'Of hym that stood in greet prosperitee, / And is yfallen out of heighe degree / Into myserie, and endeth wrecchedly'.⁴¹ The king cannot be rescued from the inevitability of his mortality, as the birth of the monster, the weighing of the apple, and Alexander's final betrayal and death implacably reveal.

The death of Bucephalus, Alexander's companion since boyhood and, significantly, a major avatar of his prowess and masculinity, heralds the beginning of his decline and fall in earnest. Even though the death of his (by now somewhat elderly) horse is an event that might fittingly be associated with some sadness, Alexander's extreme reaction borders on the ridiculous – 'quhareat the king sa hie displeit was / that nowtherane he etis, drinkis na slepis' (17,386–7) – and begins to change the mood of the text. Another character flaw suddenly becomes apparent: a self-centredness which has been present throughout his reign – glimpsed in his aloofness from other men, except for Aristotle and Samson – but which has not been fully textually 'visible' until this moment. He begins to display cowardice and paranoia: never particularly close to his men, he now imposes bizarre rules on them. 'Dredand for treyson, / Becaus he wist he suld de of poysoun' (17,512–13), he enforces compulsory hygiene standards (17,518) and forbids those attending him to wear 'sleif na serk na nane clething' (17,517). Finally, the poet introduces a kind of quasi-theatrical irony at line 17,928 as we see, in another expansion unique to the *Buik*, that when Alexander does finally consume poison, it is at a feast that has been organized by his loyal captains and his wife Roxane with the specific purpose of distracting him from 'his malancoly' (17,928).

Alexander thus moves from his previous roles as pseudo-epic hero in the first and third sections of the poem, and detached observer of courtly romance in the second, to a tragic and fallen figure. Previously the idealized corrector of non-knightly behaviour in others, whether alien tribes-people or errant kings, Alexander now behaves in an outlandishly grief-stricken manner which makes him a figure of intemperance and foolishness, even requiring correction from

³⁹ James Simpson, *The Oxford English Literary History*, vol. 2: *Reform and Cultural Revolution, 1350–1547* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), p. 119.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ Geoffrey Chaucer, 'The Prologue of the Monk's Tale', in *The Riverside Chaucer*, p. 241 (lines 1975–7).

his own wife. When she discovers him attempting to commit suicide in order to speed his slow death by poisoning, it is the Queen who must lecture the King on the ways of honour,

Sayand, 'Ar 3e nocht king and empreoure,
Quhilk neuer 3itt had lak na dishonoure?
And gif 3e sla youre-selff, quhat will men say?
The honoure þat 3e wan is quyte away.'

(lines 18,201–4)

It is worth noting that Roxane's speech is far longer, more impassioned and more direct than it appears in previous texts such as the *Prose Alexander*, the *Historia de Preliis* or the *Roman d'Alexandre*, suggesting that it is an original addition by the Buik-poet.⁴²

The emotional pitch of these passages is further heightened by the poet's extended reference to the zodiac, lamenting the fact that although the seasons change from the height of summer to the coldest depths of winter in an endless cycle, a man who has fallen from power is seldom able to return to his former life of glory:

In somer, quhen þe son is at the hicht,
And of all grouth has mast vertew and mycht,
Quhen it is heast, þa[n] it mon descend,
And euer discendand to þe lawest end
To Capricorne into the zodiakis;
And syne agane his cours vpwart he makis
[...]

Bot man ourethrawne ful seildin cummys agane.

(lines 17,500–9)

Presented in the context of Alexander's fall from 'vertew and mycht', this circular journey of the seasons may be intended to remind the reader of the Wheel of Fortune, an established medieval symbol signalling an impending fall from grace or favour. While at the time of Alexander's conquests the reader had been led to believe, in line with the advisory tone of the first section, that it was the hero's superior fighting skills, physical courage and personal qualities which had led to his triumph, this passage gives a sense of Alexander's failure as no less inevitable than the turning of the seasons. This suggests in turn that his success may have been more influenced by fate and destiny than we had hitherto suspected, a suggestion which retrospectively weakens some of the advisory aspects of the earlier sections of the poem. The tale of an Alexander whose exemplary qualities can be mimicked by those who wish to emulate his success is eroded, replaced by one of an Alexander whose victories were, in significant proportion, given to him by destiny and are now as easily taken away.

At the last, Alexander's heroic status is returned, but this time in a hollow

⁴² Martin, 'Of Wisdome', p. 85; Bunt, 'A Wife There Was', p. 48.

form, both in the lamentations that follow his death and as the empire is divided and falls apart when his leadership is lost (18,830–19,264). The narration dwells on the extended fallout and the in-fighting that lasts until ‘eftirwart that Iulius Sesar come’ (19,265). The spectacle of Alexander’s empire falling apart during the minority of his son Alior revisits the particularly Scottish anxieties about minority kingship that the poem had previously debunked with the golf-ball exchange in the first section, and demonstrates how far the text has shifted in tone and genre. The poem now stresses not only the disaster that is Alexander’s loss of his empire, but the deeper and more pervasive pain of the empire’s loss of Alexander as leader and protector.

The Buik of King Alexander exploits the format by creating, within what purports to be a romance narrative with advisory aspects, four sub-sections that divide the narrative along remarkably discernable lines. This allows the *Buik* to work in a number of distinct genres, providing advice and examples of worthy conduct for different situations and conditions across the lifetime of a warrior or a prince, while also offering entertainment that ranges across a variety of different types of medieval narrative, from the courtly to the tragic. This is, however, complicated both by the text’s persistent anxieties concerning Alexander’s ability to live up to his own role as a model of kingship, and by the character flaws revealed in the final section of the poem, particularly in his loss of courage when faced with his own death. Although the poem repeatedly tries to bolster Alexander’s potential as a role-model by stressing his mercy and generosity, his chivalry, his godliness and his fighting abilities both physical and verbal, this cannot stem the poem’s slide into tragedy in its final two thousand lines. The multiple and many-layered exploitations of genre at work in the *Buik of King Alexander* thus complicate any attempt to categorize the text as a romance, a *speculum regis*, or a simple combination of the two, and instead point towards the richness and complexity of Scottish storytelling in the mid-fifteenth century, a complexity that ultimately contributes to ‘þe worthyness’ of what the *Buik*-poet continues, even in the final lines of the poem, to term ‘þe romance’ (19,338).

Sir Gawain and the Green Knight and the Limits of Chivalry

Laura Ashe

According to the chronicler, the middle of the fourteenth century saw the king of England seek to recreate the Arthurian court:

De gentillesse de cœur il [Edward III] s'avisa qu'il feroit refaire et rediffier le chastel de Windesore, que le roy Artus avoit fait faire, et où fut establie premierement la Table Ronde à l'occasion des prœux chevaliers qui estoient adoncq, et qu'il feroit et establiroit une pareille à celle Table Ronde pour plus essauchier l'onnour de ses chevaliers, qui si bien l'avoient servi qu'il les tenoit pour prœux, et tant que on ne trovast les semblablez en quelque royaume, et luy sembloit qu'il ne les pouoit trop honnourer, tant les amoit. Si fist crier par tout son royaume feste generale et court plainiere pour ordonner celle Table Ronde, et manda par tous pays dames et damoiselles, chevaliers et escuiers, et que chascun, sans point d'excusation, y venist pour faire celle grande feste à Windesore, à Penthecouste l'an de grace mil CCC XLIII.¹

[In the nobility of his heart he resolved that he would rebuild the castle of Windsor, which Arthur first constructed and where the Round Table was first established, on account of the prowess of the knights who were there then, [and that he would establish an equal to this Round Table in order to increase the honour of his knights,] who had served him so well that he held them so worthy and noble that their peers would not be found in any kingdom: and it seemed to him that he could not honour them too much, so much did he love them. And so the King proclaimed throughout his kingdom a great feast and a great court for the institution of this Round Table, and summoned from all lands ladies and damsels, knights and esquires to be present at this great feast of Windsor without fail, at Pentecost in the year of grace 1344.]²

The chronicler's near-contemporary account of this festive occasion, around the time of the Gawain-poet's writing, serves to illustrate the great cultural importance of the aristocratic code of chivalry during Edward III's reign, promulgated by the king himself as the supreme ethical model of noble behaviour. The celebration of the prowess and glory of the mounted knight fed the serious and successful wars in

¹ *Chronique de Jean le Bel*, ed. by Jules Viard and Eugène Déprez, 2 vols (Paris: Renouard, 1904–5), II, pp. 26–7.

² Trans. by Maurice Keen, *Chivalry* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1984), p. 191, with omissions supplied in square brackets (so the knights *qui si bien l'avoient servi* are Edward's, not Arthur's).

France, but as Jean le Bel's account shows, it was intimately bound up with display, feasting, tournaments, and the propagandistic exploitation of courtly romance and chronicle. Where his father and grandfather had discouraged tournaments, Edward III spent lavishly on them, and following the great festival of 1344 and the construction of the replica Round Table which can still be seen at Winchester, in 1348 he established the élite brotherhood of the Order of the Garter,³ famously associated with *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* by the addition of its motto to the manuscript. This knightly order had a membership of only twenty-six, including the king and the Black Prince: the effect was to associate chivalry with the highest nobility, and to celebrate both noble lineage and chivalric behaviour as the pinnacle of lay achievement. In 1316 Pope John XXII had finally revoked the futile ban on tournaments,⁴ and during the fourteenth century the efforts of canon lawyers had extended the doctrine of the just war to encompass the war in France, as necessary.⁵ Importantly, then, this chivalry was represented as entirely coherent with Christianity, and with a species of lay piety which could express itself in bellicose yet honourable terms.

But this fourteenth-century celebration of chivalry as the highest calling of the noblest men, 'the male, aristocratic form of lay piety',⁶ stands in nuanced contrast with the early formation of chivalry in the twelfth century. In 1984, Maurice Keen suggested that the Christian strand of chivalry should not be overestimated; he regarded the crusading ideal and the language of chivalric piety as in origin no more than a veneer which prettified a group of much older, martial and heroic, values.⁷ A year later, C. Stephen Jaeger offered an influential counter-argument proposing that the literature of chivalry and courtliness, developed by the courtier clerics of the late twelfth century as purposeful social engineering, served actively to civilize the warrior class: 'They eagerly accepted the lessons of romance, not out of self-interest or social pressure, but because they admired and were inspired by the rule of life they dictated.'⁸ This view is important, and the emotional commitment of knights to a chivalric code can often be read in the literature, but the explanation of didactic influence in one direction, from clergy to laity, cannot alone account for the astonishing longevity and success of the idea and practice of chivalry.⁹ More recently, scholars of twelfth-century English history have noted the particular cultural and economic circumstances under which chivalric

³ Michael Prestwich, *The Three Edwards: War and State in England, 1272–1377* (London: Methuen, 1980), pp. 204–5; Keen, *Chivalry*, pp. 100, 191–6.

⁴ Richard W. Kaeuper, *Chivalry and Violence in Medieval Europe* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), p. 80.

⁵ Prestwich, *The Three Edwards*, p. 208.

⁶ Kaeuper, *Chivalry and Violence*, p. 47.

⁷ Keen, *Chivalry*, pp. 52–62.

⁸ C. Stephen Jaeger, *The Origins of Courtliness: Civilizing Trends and the Formation of Courtly Ideals, 939–1210* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1985), ch. 11, 'Instructing the Laity in Courtesy', pp. 211–35 (p. 235).

⁹ Kaeuper, *Chivalry and Violence*, p. 84, discusses the key terms of this debate, which he frames as one between idealism and cynicism.

behaviours in warfare and tournament emerged and thrived. For John Gillingham, 'the conventions of chivalry were appropriate to a certain stage of socio-economic development [...] chivalry involves violence controlled so as to spare the lives of the leading combatants.'¹⁰ The most important – and to historians most noticeable – change from eleventh- to twelfth-century warfare was a new reluctance to kill or mutilate noble opponents:¹¹

The emphasis on sparing a defeated or disadvantaged opponent, on ransom and honourable captivity, on the qualities of mercy, magnanimity and *franchise* as constituents of noble conduct befitting a knight, went beyond the raw warrior virtues of courage, prowess and largesse, and marked the crucial transition from a heroic to a chivalric ethos.¹²

Bluntly, such behaviour appears at the moment when economic developments have made it profitable. During the twelfth century, the ransoming of high-status prisoners became increasingly important, and not only for cash (which is an indicator of the increasingly monetarized economy of the time) but also for property – towns and castles – with strategic significance.¹³ The chivalric quality of magnanimity, therefore, embodies entirely practical considerations, with a pleasantly moral flavour. A culture that stated that it was wrong to mutilate or execute aristocratic prisoners, in a time of endemic skirmishing and raiding, benefited all sides, and warfare became ever more clearly an economic gamble, in which, for the leading combatants, fortunes, rather than lives, were won and lost.¹⁴ But the chief cultural exponent and advertisement of chivalrous behaviour was not warfare so much as the tournament circuit, which emerged in northern France in the second half of the twelfth century.¹⁵ Here the ritual and display of idealized knightly prowess and noble conduct, and the reputations made and lost, recorded by poets and chroniclers, 'provided a crucial link between the literary expression of

¹⁰ John Gillingham, 'Conquering the Barbarians: War and Chivalry in Britain and Ireland', in *The English in the Twelfth Century: Imperialism, National Identity and Political Values* (Woodbridge: Boydell, 2000), pp. 41–58 (p. 55).

¹¹ See Matthew Strickland, *War and Chivalry: The Conduct and Perception of War in England and Normandy, 1066–1217* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), p. 339.

¹² Strickland, *War and Chivalry*, p. 340.

¹³ Gillingham, 'Conquering the Barbarians', pp. 53–5. The point is made by comparison with the contemporary warfare of the Celtic peoples, and the deeply unchivalrous treatment of them by the English and French: 'conventions of chivalry were appropriate to a certain stage of socio-economic development, one which England had reached by the twelfth century, but which Celtic countries had not' (p. 55).

¹⁴ On fourteenth-century war (the civil wars of the fifteenth century were of course markedly more dangerous for the leading combatants), see e.g. Michael Prestwich, 'The Enterprise of War', in *A Social History of England, 1200–1500*, ed. by Rosemary Horrox and W. Mark Ormrod (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), pp. 74–90.

¹⁵ I have discussed late-twelfth-century tournament culture, and its representation in contemporary romance and vernacular chronicle, in 'William Marshal, Lancelot, and Arthur: Chivalry and Kingship', *Anglo-Norman Studies*, 30 (2007), 19–40.

chivalrous values and the real world'.¹⁶ But fundamentally, the tournament refined to perfection the mechanism by which prowess was rewarded with both symbolic and, inextricably, monetary capital, while the risk of death was pushed firmly into the background. The growing popularity of the tournament was encouraged not only by the efflorescence of new cultural ideals, but by an ever-increasing group of landless knights in need of the rewards of competition to support themselves. Such realities were apparent from the outset, and found their way to the surface in satirical criticism: 'Facit amor militem strenuum et ferum? / Non; imo pauperies et defectus rerum.'¹⁷ ('Is it love that makes a knight vigorous and brave? No – it's poverty, and all the things he doesn't have.')

The rules of chivalry, then, enabled martial activity to be rendered as an economic system, dealing in both the symbolic capital of reputation, and the real cash held in ransoms, prizes and trophies. This emphasis on sparing life, and on the use of knightly competition as a mechanism of economic exchange, had a particularly strong and negative impact on the idea of the heroic death. Death is an end with no economic value, and not only for the individual concerned but also for the knight who might have spared him and acquired a ransom, and beyond him for the whole community of knights: it is inherent to the system that it needs as many players as possible to sustain itself, and chivalry encouraged a sense of brotherhood between combatants which helpfully displaced older notions of masculine ruthlessness. Fatal accidents did, of course, occur in tournaments, and several kings of England banned them as wasteful and costly of both funds and men. But the notion of the properly chivalric, non-fatal combat was so strong that the *History of William Marshal* describes the eponymous hero's horror at the death of his opponent the Count of Perche, stopping in the midst of the *melée* in an attempt to revive the man he had faced so often in tournaments – even though the occasion in question was one of the desperate battles against invading French armies, in defence of the young Henry III.¹⁸

This concern surfaces early in the Arthurian romances, in which (until the end of the court, and thus effectively the world) named knights simply do not die: there is no symbolic capital to be gained from a death in battle, no cause for which the sacrifice of a life would be appropriate or desired. The purpose of the knight's prowess is its own display, the honour which accrues from its repeated demonstration; the act of prowess which is not witnessed, and the death which puts an end to prowess, are both worthless: 'Vous vos volés faire ochire en lieu ou ne poés faire nule proece? Et se vous le faisiés, ne seroit ele ja seue; dont n'avés vous assés fait?' ('Do you wish to get yourself killed in a spot where you can perform no act

¹⁶ Keen, *Chivalry*, p. 100.

¹⁷ *Altercatio Phyllidis et Florae*, lines 135–6, in *Les Débats du clerc et du chevalier dans la littérature poétique du Moyen Age*, ed. by Charles Oulmont (Paris: Champion, 1911), p. 113.

¹⁸ *History of William Marshal*, ed. by A. J. Holden, trans. by S. Gregory, with notes by D. Crouch, 3 vols, ANTS, OPS 4–6 (London: ANTS, 2002–6), lines 16,729–68.

of prowess? And even if you did perform some act of prowess, it would never be known. Haven't you done enough?')¹⁹

Thus the ideology of chivalry was not, at base, an ideology of bravery or heroism to the point of death. In fact, it was an amelioration, and an adaptation, of a much older warrior code which *had* focused upon such extreme values. Earlier literary works and historical chronicles admire the willingness of the warrior to fight to the death: this is the grandeur of the Old English *Beowulf* or *Battle of Maldon*, or, modulated by the promise of heavenly glory, of the Old French *Song of Roland*. In the epic, the hero is shown to be willing to die for his land or people, his lord or his God, defending these values against implacable opposition, sacrificing his life in the cause. In the Arthurian romance, the hero has nothing to defend but his own reputation, in a world structured for his success; his death cannot be anything but a failure. So the notion that chivalry is a code of heroism – which is to say, for our purposes, bravery to the point of death – is a convenient fiction, a veneer applied to both enable and obscure the economic aspects of martial endeavour, in order to meet its proponents' own expectations of themselves. In origin, it is an honour code by which the individual may risk and display himself to gain wealth and reputation, not one which attends to self-sacrifice, death, or any other effacement of the individual.

All of this is by way of preparation for an assertion: I would suggest that it is not possible to die for chivalry. It was possible to die for the ancient warrior code of loyalty to one's lord. It was eminently possible, and in certain circumstances recommended, to die for Christianity: and of course in the Christianized Arthurian romance, the Grail romance, the successful knight is crowned with death, while the court, its chivalry, and the remaining sinful knights, are the poorer for it. It is no accident that the tale of the Grail Quest is immediately followed by the inexorable destruction of the court and the apocalyptic ending to the Arthurian romance; the point of the Christian quest is the abandonment of this earthly model.²⁰ But the death of the chivalric knight, whether in literature or in life, can only be a loss to the chivalric ideal, as is apparent in the poetic lamentations produced after the deaths of figures such as the Black Prince, William Marshal, and the Young King Henry: 'Ha! Dex, que fera or largesse / E chivalerie e proësce / Qui dedenz lui soleient meindre? / Or n'avront il mais ou remaindre.' ('God! What will now become of Generosity, Chivalry and Prowess, once wont to make his heart their

¹⁹ *Lancelot: roman en prose du XIIIe siècle*, ed. by Alexandre Micha, 9 vols (Geneva: Droz, 1978–83), VIII, p. 473; *Lancelot Part II*, trans. by Carleton W. Carroll, in *Lancelot-Grail: The Old French Arthurian Vulgate and Post-Vulgate in Translation*, 5 vols, ed. by Norris J. Lacy (New York: Garland, 1993–6), II, pp. 234–5. I have discussed the creation of the Arthurian romance hero, the idealized knight who does not die, in 'The Hero and his Realm in Medieval English Romance', in *Boundaries in Medieval Romance*, ed. by Neil Cartlidge (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2008), pp. 129–47, esp. pp. 135–41.

²⁰ In Gabrielle Spiegel's words: 'Already by the end of the twelfth century, chivalric ideology within the romans underwent a process of spiritualization by which the ethical codes and mores of the knightly classes were reinscribed according to the values of a pervasive Christian ethos.' *Romancing the Past: The Rise of Vernacular Prose Historiography in Thirteenth-Century France* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993), p. 153.

home? Now they shall no longer have a place to stay.')²¹ The death of Richard I, caused by a gangrenous arrow wound sustained when he had ridden out to inspect the progress of a siege without putting his armour on (and supposedly applauded the plucky archer rather than ducking the bolt) was interestingly regarded by contemporaries as both tragedy and embarrassment.²² And so the chivalric romance, chief literary exponent of this culture, simply does not depict the death of its protagonist. In Chrétien's finely-constructed Arthurian world, there is no risk at all; the court, the testing-ground outside the court, and all obstacles and opponents exist solely to permit the development of the knight-protagonist; the threat of death in the chivalric hero's exploits is understood to be an illusion, no more than a function of narrative drama.

The beheading game of *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, however, would seem to suggest otherwise, presenting an apparently non-negotiable threat of death, and one which therefore receives predictable criticism from a chivalric court:

Warloker° to haf wro3t had more wyt bene	<i>More prudently</i>
And haf dy3t° 3onder dere° a duk to haue worþed°.	<i>appointed nobleman been</i>
A lowande° leder of ledez° in londe hym wel semez,	<i>illustrious men</i>
And so had better haf ben þen britned° to no3t,	<i>destroyed</i>
Hadet° wyth an aluish° mon, for angardez° pryde. ²³	<i>Beheaded elvish arrogant</i>

There is no honour to be derived from this death, brought about by bad judgement, foolishness, and pride – no-one will witness it, and Gawain will be utterly destroyed, brought to *no3t*.

The trope of the beheading game is evidently ancient, with traces of the brutality and opacity of folklore. In sum, as will become apparent, I suggest that the Gawain-Poet exploited this device as a means of exposing the emptiness at the core of the chivalric project. However, he was not alone in employing the beheading game in a chivalric romance, and his immediate sources are most likely to have been such literature. Elisabeth Brewer's invaluable book *Sources and Analogues* documents several similar episodes from texts of the eleventh, twelfth and thirteenth centuries.²⁴ Nevertheless, I will argue that there are reasons to regard the Gawain-Poet's handling of the challenge as distinctive and purposeful.

The earliest analogue identified, from the Irish *Fled Bricrend* (*The Feast of*

²¹ *History of William Marshal*, lines 6941–4.

²² See John Gillingham, *Richard I* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1999), p. 324. The author of the *History of William Marshal* asserts that the arrow was *envenimé* (poisoned), and that he cannot speak more of Richard's death because grief forbids it: lines 11,759–72. The author of *The Crusade and Death of Richard I* describes an emotional scene in which the archer abjectly begs the dying Richard's pardon and is forgiven, before Richard himself indulges in a lengthy speech of confession and repentance for his sins: *The Crusade and Death of Richard I*, ed. by R. C. Johnston (Oxford: ANTS, 1961), pp. 46–7.

²³ *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, in *The Poems of the Pearl Manuscript*, ed. by Malcolm Andrew and Ronald Waldron, rev. edn (Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 1996), pp. 207–300, lines 677–81.

²⁴ Elisabeth Brewer, *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight: Sources and Analogues* (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 1992), pp. 18–60.

Bricriu), pre-dates chivalry, and is a nice illustration of the motif's roots in the metaphors of basic psychology: the challenge is not to surrender to the personification of Terror (*Úath*), to accept the possibility – even the apparent certainty – of death. This is the warrior's covenant, and in displaying his brave willingness to die, Cúchulainn fulfils it.²⁵

The second is the story of Carados, which appears in several versions, from the anonymous continuations of *Perceval*.²⁶ Here the challenge is regarded by the court as fearful but also valueless:

L'espee trait et si lor tent,
Mais n'i a nul qui l'ost baillier.
Ainz dient tuit li chevalier
Molt seroit fols cil qui ferroit,
Qu'en aventure se metroit,
Si n'i aroit pris ne honeur.²⁷

[He drew his sword and so held it out to them, but there was no-one there who dared take it. But all the knights said that whoever did would be extremely foolish, for by it he would run into danger, and thus he would have neither reward nor honour.]

But Carados is a 'noviax chevaliers' ('new knight', line 3383), young and unproven, who leaps up to take the strange knight's beheading challenge. Arthur insists there is no need: 'ceste prooise / Peüssiez sanz honte laissier [...] emprise avez trop grant folie' ('you can relinquish this exploit without shame [...] the undertaking is so very foolish'; lines 3390–6, Brewer p. 26). Nevertheless Carados beheads the challenger, and shows no fear throughout; the court express horror and sorrow, and then attempt to pay off the strange knight. He refuses and Carados kneels down, for an immediate return blow, but the knight does not strike; he raises him up and congratulates him: 'Ne te ferai or nul mal plus, / Car trop es vaillans chevaliers / Et hardis et seürs et fiers.' ('I will not do you any more harm now because you are too valiant a knight, and strong and trustworthy and proud'; lines 3538–40, Brewer, p. 28). His next revelation is explanatory: '[t]u iez mes fix' ('You are my son'; line 3544, Brewer p. 28).²⁸ Striking here is the court's insistence that the game

²⁵ Brewer, *Sources and Analogues*, pp. 18–23; taken from *Fled Bricrend: The Feast of Bricriu*, ed. and trans. by George Henderson (London: Irish Texts Society, 1899), pp. 97–101.

²⁶ For a discussion of the various continuations' correspondences with *Gawain*, see Claude Luttrell, 'Sir Gawain and the Green Knight and the versions of Caradoc', *Forum for Modern Language Studies*, 15 (1979), 347–60.

²⁷ *The Continuations of the Old French 'Perceval' of Chrétien de Troyes*, vol. I: *The First Continuation*, ed. by William Roach (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1949), lines 3366–71; trans. by Brewer, *Sources and Analogues*, p. 25.

²⁸ In the extended version, he strikes Carados with the flat of the sword, and says: 'Sez por quoi je ne t'e ocis? / Tu e mes filz, je suis tes peres' ('Do you know why I haven't killed you? You are my son, and I am your father'): *The Continuations of the Old French 'Perceval' of Chrétien de Troyes*, vol. II: *The First Continuation*, ed. by William Roach (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1950), lines 7382–3; trans. by Brewer, *Sources and Analogues*, p. 32.

need not be accepted and, once begun, must be abandoned; that its rules are cruel and ridiculous. But Carados himself, we are explicitly told, has no fear of death, and the eventual outcome reveals that this is a test of identity and individual value: Carados's father wishes to know if his son is worthy.

The third analogous example of the beheading game, the story of Lancelot in the ruined city, is important for its thorough alignment with Christian sacrifice.²⁹ Lancelot attempts to refuse the game, because 'j'en seré blasmez se je vos oci sanz mesfet.' ('I shall be blamed if I slay you without a fault'; p. 137, Brewer p. 37.) The young knight who begs to be beheaded declares that 'cil qui volt aler devant le Sauveur du mont se doit bien espurgier de totes les vilanies et de toz les max q'il onques fist, et je en sui veraiz repentant, si voil morir en tel point' ('the man who wishes to go before the Saviour of the world ought to purge himself well of all his misdeeds and sins that he has ever committed, and I am truly repentant, so that I wish to die at this moment'; p. 137, Brewer p. 37). Lancelot swears on holy relics to accept the same peril in a year. When he returns, another man appears and states that he will kill Lancelot as Lancelot killed his brother. Lancelot 'se couche a la terre en croiz, e prie Deu merci. [...] Il prist .iii. pels d'erbe, si s'acumenia. Après s'est saigniez e beneiz, puis se redreche e met a genoilons e estent le col' ('lay down on the ground and stretched out his arms in the shape of the Cross, and prayed to God to have mercy. [...] He took three blades of grass, and so gave himself communion. After he had crossed and blessed himself, he got up and knelt down and stretched out his neck'; p. 285, Brewer p. 40). Then he is raised up, and the challenge is explained by a lady:

Ceste cité qui gaste est e li Gaste Chastel mon frere ne fusent jamais poplé de gent, ne r'eüson jamais nos terres, s'uns loials chevaliers ne fust venuz com vos estes. Il sont bien enbatu cha dedenz .xx. chevaliers en itel maniere com vos venistes; n'i a celui qui ne nos ait ocis frere o oncle o cosin germain, e trenchie la teste si com vos feïstes au chevalier; e creantoit chascun qu'il revenroit au jor qui mis ert. Tuit failloient de covenant, car nus d'aus n'i osoit revenir; e se vos eüsiez faili de revenir au jor ausi com li autre, nos eüson ceste cité perdue sanz recovrier. (p. 286)

[This city which is waste and the Waste Castle of my brother would never again be filled with people, nor should we ever have our lands again, if a knight as noble as you had not come. At least twenty knights have come here as you came; each one killed a brother or uncle or cousin of ours, and cut off his head as you did that of the knight, and each one promised that he would return on the day to be appointed. Every one broke the covenant, because not one dared to return here. And if you, like the others, had failed to return on the day, we should have lost this city forever. (p. 41)]

The challenger knight's request is specifically a religious one, as is Lancelot's

²⁹ *Le Haut Livre du Graal: Perlesvaus*, ed. by William A. Nitze and T. Atkinson Jenkins, 2 vols (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1932-7), I, pp. 136-8; 283-6; trans. by Brewer, *Sources and Analogues*, pp. 36-41.

promise to return; Lancelot approaches his death with deep piety, and ultimately it emerges that his willingness to sacrifice himself, to emulate Christ so completely, has saved a whole people from destruction.

Finally, *Hunbaut* provides an inventively comic version of the story, in which the game is offered by an entirely unchivalric figure, an ugly *vilains*. When Gawain has duly beheaded him, the twist is revealed:

Cil ouvri ans .II. ses puins,
Si cuide aler tantost aprés.
Mesire Gauvains se tint pres,
Qui d'encantement ert apris.
Le vilain a par les dras pris,
Et por ço a son esme faut
Et li encantemens default;
Car li caï mors en la place
Et li encantemens s'esface,
C'onques puis n'i ot ju parti.³⁰

[He [the churl] opened both his fists, for he intended to go after [his head] immediately. Sir Gawain, who was aware of the enchantment, kept near. He seized the churl by the clothes, and thus he failed in his plan and the magic ran out, for the churl fell dead on the spot and the magic was brought to an end, so that the double game was never again offered there.]³¹

As this Gawain outwits his unworthy, churlish opponent, he has no intention of risking his own neck.

In comparison, the beheading game in *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* is disturbing in multiple ways. From the outset, there is the strong sense that the king has made a mistake. Arthur we know is 'sumquat childgered' (line 86): he is quick to offer battle despite the Green Knight's repeated assertion that he comes in peace, and his rash seizure of the axe is rather embarrassing for the whole court:

Now hatz Arthure his axe and þe halme° grypez°,	<i>handle grips</i>
And sturnely sturez° hit aboute, þat stryke wyth hit þo3t.	<i>waves</i>
þe stif° mon hym bifore stod vpon hy3t,	<i>strong</i>
Herre° þen ani in þe hous by þe hede and more.	<i>Higher</i>
Wyth sturne schere° þer he stod he stroked his berde,	<i>expression</i>
And wyth a countenaunce dry3e° he dro3 down his cote,	<i>unmoved</i>
No more mate° ne dismayd for hys mayn° dintez°	<i>daunted mighty blows</i>
þen any burne vpon bench° hade bro3t hym to drynk	<i>Than (if) anyone at table</i>
Of wyne.	

(lines 330–8)

³⁰ *Hunbaut: Altfranzösischer Artusroman des XIII. Jahrhunderts*, ed. by Jakob Stürzinger and Hermann Breuer (Dresden: Gesellschaft für Romanische Literatur, 1914), lines 1530–9.

³¹ Trans. by Brewer, *Sources and Analogues*, p. 60, with some alterations as necessary. I am grateful for the advice of Judy Weiss on this.

There has long been a strand of scholarship which points out that, in contrast with all of the analogues, the Green Knight does not specify that he is to be beheaded. He speaks only of a *strok*, a blow, and that the axe is to be a gift to the man who takes the challenge:

If any so hardy in þis hous holdez hymseluen,
Be so bolde in his blod, brayn° in hys hede, *crazed*
Pat dar stifly strike a strok for anoþer,
I schal gif hym of my gyft þys giserne° ryche, *battle-axe*
Pis ax, þat is heuē° innogh, to hondele as hym lykes, *heavy*
And I schal bide° þe fyrst bur° as bare as I sitte. *accept blow*
(lines 285–90)

These lines leave open the possibility that the court could most properly have responded to this 'Crystemas gomen' ('Christmas game', line 283) by striking the Green Knight with something less lethal – perhaps, for symmetry, the holly branch he carries in his other hand.³² Be that as it may, the decision is not taken by Gawain, but by Arthur, and Gawain must rescue him from his own folly. So whereas in the story of Carados the entire court felt free to reject the challenge, here the court is trapped by the hotheaded pride of its king. Worse still, although Gawain courteously voices the sentiments of his own unworthiness, these lines cannot but bring to mind their polite dishonesty:

I am þe wakkest°, I wot, and of wyt feblest, *weakest*
And lest lur° of my lyf, quo laytes þe soþe°. *loss whoever seeks the truth*
Bot for as much as 3e ar myn em° I am only to prayse; *uncle*
No bounté bot your blod I in my bodé knowe.
And syþen þis note° is so nys° þat noȝt hit yow falles°, *task foolish befits*
And I haue frayned° hit at yow fyrst, foldez° hit to me. *asked belongs*
(lines 354–9)

Gawain's true status, unlike that of the unproven Carados, is exactly the opposite of his words; he is the finest knight of the court, and the one they can least afford to lose.

And so Gawain has found himself compelled to take on a ridiculous and evidently dangerous challenge. The question is, then, what is its purpose? The closest analogues offer answers to this. Carados has no status and no identity – he is an unproven knight, and he does not know who his father is. The challenge, for him, delivers both. In contrast, Gawain only has everything to lose. (One could even suggest that his reference to kinship with Arthur before taking up the hopeless challenge is a reversed, mirror image of Carados's anonymity, which is resolved by the challenge.) In the case of Lancelot in the ruined city, all is in God's hands, and

³² See Victoria L. Weiss, 'Gawain's First Failure: The Beheading Scene in *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*', *Chaucer Review*, 10 (1976), 361–6; S. L. Clark and Julian N. Wasserman, 'The Passing of the Seasons and the Apocalyptic in *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*', *South Central Review*, 3 (1986), 5–22, p. 6 and p. 16, note 7; and Sheri Ann Strite, 'Sir Gawain and the Green Knight: To Behead or Not to Behead – That Is a Question', *Philological Quarterly*, 70 (1991), 1–12.

Lancelot becomes a figure of Christ in his willingness to trust in God and give up his life. That he does save a whole people without *actually* having to die, unlike Christ, is itself a sign of the elisions of Christian chivalry: that it desires holiness as a decorative addition to its earthly ideals, not as an alternative. In contrast – and this is perhaps the most unnerving aspect of the beheading challenge in *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* – there is explicitly *no* purpose to the Green Knight's game: 'Forþy I craue in þis court a Crystemas gomen, / For hit is 3ol and Nwe 3er, and here ar 3ep mony.' ('Therefore I beg in this court a Christmas game, for it is Yuletide and New Year, and here are many eager youths', lines 283–4.)

The only reason for Gawain to go to his death is to defend the chivalry of Arthur's court. And so it is here that I return to my point that it is not possible to die for chivalry; chivalry cannot be augmented or supported by the death of its greatest exponent. As if to make this even clearer, the Gawain-Poet makes another change to his sources: only here is the second beheading to take place somewhere else. This means that the sense in which Gawain is acting for, and as, the whole court is drastically attenuated: they wave him off into the distance, expecting never to know any more, cursing the pride which committed him to destruction. And of course this makes even more apparent the pointlessness of the expected death; at least in the case of the Carados analogues the hero's courage is displayed before the court, so that his putative sacrifice is recognized. Here Gawain is to ride off to find death alone, with no one even to tell his story. And the court's measure of chivalry, having lost its finest knight, would be so much reduced.

Is it possible, then, that we are to regard the challenge as commensurate with a Christian sacrifice, or a martyr's death? It seems not. The pattern of Lancelot offers us such an analogy; there is a real purpose to his actions, and his ignorance of that underlying purpose, which reveals his trust in God and his unquestioning virtue, follows the structures of parable. But if Gawain were to die, it would be for nothing: to keep the arbitrary rules of a festive game, a game whose only hidden purpose, it eventually, bizarrely (and unconvincingly) emerges, was 'to haf greued Gaynour and gart hir to dy3e' ('to have frightened Guinevere to death', line 2460) before it was even played out. And so he is caught in a genuine but oddly meaningless trap: a trap which is tightened around him, and the reader, by his own fears and forebodings. He must keep his word, or the court will be dishonoured. But if he keeps his word and goes to his death, the court will lose its finest knight, and so lose the mainspring of its honour. In other versions the reader waits with interest – or without – to see how the problem will be solved. Here Gawain's own certainty that it cannot be – and the narrator's dark comments – contribute to a creeping disquiet:

Now þenk wel, Sir Gawan,
For woþe° þat þou ne wonde° *danger hold back*
Þis auenture for to frayn° *seek, quest*
Þat þou hatz tan on honde°. *taken in hand*
(lines 487–90)

Gawain must keep his promise; the possibility offered in the Carados story, that

such a foolish oath could be disregarded, has been closed off by Arthur's actions. And unlike in *Hunbaut*, he knows no trick by which to get round the conditions – or at least, not until the lady offers him the girdle.

The point, then, is that Gawain is correct in his first, instinctive thought about the girdle: 'My3t he haf slypped to be vnslayn þe sle3t were noble' ('If he could contrive not to be killed, it would be a noble device', line 1858). The only way to preserve chivalry is for him to keep to his agreement, and yet to stay alive; the girdle seems to be the only means of achieving this. Chivalry was invented as a means of preserving life, of enabling knightly endeavour to be economically viable as a day-to-day activity, with a much lower risk of death than that implied by the earlier warrior code. To expect a man to die for such a social convention is inherently a mocking proposition. What it reveals is a hypocrisy at the heart of chivalry, because it had, despite its roots in the mitigation of violence, become associated with extremes of bravery.

Romances are marked by what we might call an inflation of knightly exploit, as the hero fights opponents of ever-increasing numbers and difficulty, indicating his unmatched bravery and prowess in clichéd excess. The Gawain-Poet casually undermines this trope in a few lines, as Gawain is said to have fought a variety of vicious beasts and monsters during his journey, none of which troubled him more than the cold weather:

At vche warþe° oþer water° þer þe wy3e° passed	<i>ford stream knight</i>
He fonde a foo° hym byfore, bot ferly° hit were,	<i>enemy astonishing</i>
And þat so foule and so felle° þat fe3t° hym byhode.	<i>fierce fight</i>
So mony meruayl bi mount þer þe mon fyndez	
Hit were to tore° for to telle of þe tenþe dole°.	<i>difficult tenth part</i>
Sumwhyle wyth wormez° he werrez and with wolues als,	<i>serpents</i>
Sumwhyle wyth wodwos° þat woned° in þe knarrez°,	<i>wildmen lived crags</i>
Boþe wyth bullez° and berez°, and borez° oþerquyle,	<i>bulls bears boars</i>
And etaynez° þat hym aneledo° of þe he3e felle.	<i>giants pursued</i>
Nade° he ben du3ty and dry3e° and Dry3tyn° had serued,	<i>Had not strong God</i>
Douteles he hade ben ded and dreped° ful ofte.	<i>defeated</i>
For werre wrathed hym not so much þat wynter nas wors.	

(lines 715–26)

This rapid enumeration gently mocks the usual measures of knightly bravery, while bringing to the forefront Gawain's physical body, its weakness to cold, to nature. The resultant juxtaposition of knightly agency and bodily helplessness brings about a disturbing reflection upon the terms of the Green Knight's challenge. In effect, this dismissive reference to Gawain's easy success in knightly combat serves to clarify the frightening truth, encoded into the beheading game in its earliest written record, where the challenger is Terror himself: the fact that to kneel down and accept a killing blow without any attempt at defence requires the greatest courage of all. But if that is so, then this greatest act of bravery actually has no relation to chivalry, the code of knightly action in defiance of death. Here at the vanishing point, the highest point of human courage, the actions are not those of a

knight, but rather those of a martyr, a figure of Christ. And such a death *would* be meaningful; a martyr can indeed accept death for the sake of his faith, and for his soul. But, in Augustine's frequently repeated dictum, 'martyrem non facit poena, sed causa' ('it is the cause, not the blow, which makes the martyr').³³ Gawain, the champion of chivalry, engaged in an inconsequential Christmas game, far from the eyes of the court who are, by the structure of the romance, the only judges of his actions and the only people who can reward him for performing them, cannot be said to be dying for anything.

And so Gawain seeks to succeed in the only way he can – to meet magic with magic, in order to keep his promise, and not to die. And the Green Knight, who stands with one foot in the chivalric world, forgives him for it: 'for 3e lufed your lyf – þe lasse I yow blame' (line 2368). But this is the point at which Christianity, that rival moral code, cannot be ignored. Gawain's pentangle represents a combined ideology of Christian chivalry; but in fact he repeatedly has to choose one or the other – first in the bedroom, then, far worse, in the confessional, and finally in his ironic and self-deceiving declaration to the guide that he has fully put his trust in God:

'Bi Goddez self, quop Gawayn,
'I wyl nauþer grete ne grone;
To Goddez wylle I am ful bayn° *submissive*
And to Hym I haf me tone.'

(lines 2156–8)

Christianity is a constant commentary upon the chivalric knight's decisions, and by the poem's end it is a painful comparison. In making his false confession,³⁴ and in swearing his trust in God before he faces his doom, Gawain damns himself in a manner beyond the Green Knight's, or the court's, capacity to forgive.

Romance relies on the construction of apparent near-misses, on the pretence that the stakes are high. As far as the court is concerned, this is another such near-miss, safely negotiated by their chivalric champion. But for Gawain, this was no near-miss; it was a full hit. In the realization that when it came to the point, he had no intention of dying for his ideals, Gawain has lost his faith in those ideals. The irony is that a proper adherence to Christian morals would have saved him from all shame; but that is no help: it means that Christianity, not chivalry, is the answer. And the key difference between chivalry and Christianity, as moral codes, is that chivalry establishes artificial tests for itself: the knight goes through a ceremony of arming, of riding out into hostile territory, where his behaviour is codified in set patterns of knightly conduct. In contrast, Christianity is the constant, unchanging moral test, adjudged by the God who sees everything. The trick for the Christian, then, is to behave with absolute consistency, to be the same moral being in all

³³ See, for example, Augustine, *Sermons*, nos 285 and 331, in *Patrologiae Cursus Completus, Series Latina*, ed. by J.-P. Migne (Paris, 1844–55), XXXVIII, cols 1293, 1459, 1460.

³⁴ There is some critical debate about the falsity of Gawain's confession: see W. R. J. Barron, *Trawthe and Treason: The Sin of Gawain Reconsidered* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1980), pp. 85–94.

situations, regardless of circumstances; and the return is that Christianity (unlike chivalry) will provide an unambiguous guide for behaviour in all circumstances. Chivalry is concerned with outcomes, with exteriors: Gawain completes the challenge and returns alive, and so the court celebrate his faultlessly chivalric and successful behaviour. But Christianity is concerned with interiors, and with motivations, and here Gawain has fallen short – he fails to be consistent; in keeping and concealing the girdle he performs an act in private which he would have been ashamed to perform, indeed never would have performed, in public. He does so because the chivalric code which bound him in to the Green Knight's game provided no solution to its fundamental challenge, other than to attempt to cheat. In offering Gawain a meaningless death, the poet tests the limits of his adherence to the code which condemned him to it; he breaks.

An ideology for which one cannot die is a flawed, and possibly worthless, ideology. It must be abandoned at some point; how can it compete with anything which *is* worth dying for? In *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* the poet delicately exploits the genre of the romance in order finally to betray it; he deconstructs the ideology of chivalry from within. In the context of an entire canon of literature, buttressed by a vast cultural programme of celebratory ritual and practice, supported by the king himself, this finest of the English romances functions, ultimately, to expose the absurdity of its inherited ideals.

Index of Manuscripts

Aberystwyth, National Library of Wales

Binding Fragments 572 29n5, 34n21, 36
Anglo-Norman manuscripts 74

Bern, Burgerbibliothek

MS 568 64n23

Cambridge, Corpus Christi College

MS 50 29n5, 31n11, 35, 38, 77n14

Cambridge, Gonville and Caius College

MS 107/176 29n5, 31, 32, 34n21, 34n23, 35,
37, 38
MS 175 79, 83

Cambridge, Trinity College

MS O.4.32 83n41
MS O.9.34 77n16

Cambridge, University Library

Additional MS 2751 29n5, 38
MS Ff.2.38 29n5, 31, 32, 33, 34n21, 35, 38,
39, 41
MS Gg.4.27.2 78, 82n33

Cologne-Geneva, Bibliotheca Bodmeriana

MS 67 (Marske Hall MS) 29n5, 31n11,
34n22, 35, 38, 83
MS 82 78
MS 168 29n5, 31n11, 34n22, 35, 38, 86

Dublin, Trinity College

MS 523 76n11
MS 667 98, 99

Durham, Cathedral Library

MS C.IV.27B 77n16

Edinburgh, National Library of Scotland

Advocates' MS 19.2.1 (the Auchinleck
MS) 29n5, 31, 32, 34n21, 35, 37, 38,
49n20, 67n29, 69, 76n10, 77, 78, 79, 80,
82n33, 83, 86, 88, 92n7, 94
MS GD 112/71/9 140

Karlsruhe, Badischen Landesbibliothek

MS 345 77n14

Lincoln, Cathedral Library

MS 91 (Northern Thornton MS) 82

London, British Library

Add. MS 19720 130
Add. MS 31042 92n7
Add. MS 35288 113n11
Add. MS 37492 (the Fillingham
MS) 80, 86, 92n7
Add. MS 38662 (the Edwardes
MS) 29n5, 31n11, 32n18, 35, 38, 53
Add. MS 40732 140
Add. MS 46701 77n16
Arundel MS 220 92n7
Cotton MS Claudius B.VII 98
Cotton MS Vespasian A.VII 76n11
Cotton MS Vespasian A.XIII 98
Cotton MS Vespasian B.XIV 83
Cotton MS Vitellius D.3 82n33
Egerton MS 2515 76n11
Egerton MS 2862 77, 79, 82n33
Egerton MS 3028 80n29
Harley MS 978 83
Harley MS 2253 15, 19, 78
Harley MS 2361 99
Harley MS 3775 29n5
Lansdowne MS 388 92n7
Laud misc. MS.622 76n10
Royal MS 8.F.IX 29n5, 31n11, 34n22, 35
Royal MS 12 C XII 77n14
Royal MS 15 E VI (the Talbot-Shrewsbury
MS) 71, 79n26

London, College of Arms

Arundel MS 14 78, 85
Arundel MS 27 29n5

London, Lambeth Library

fragment of *Boeve de Hamtoun* 78

London, Lincoln's Inn

MS 150 77

The Exploitations of Medieval Romance

New Haven, Yale University, Beinecke Library

MS 395 31n11, 34n22, 35, 38, 84n42
MS 591 29n5

Oxford, Bodleian Library

Ashmole MS 33 80, 92n7
Digby MS 23 54n40
Digby MS 177 52n33
Fairfax MS 10 83n41
Hatton MS 100 82n35
Lat. misc. MS b.17 77n16
Laud misc. MS 108 78n19
Laud misc. MS 622 76n10, 77
Rawlinson MS d 913 76n11

Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale

fonds français MS 1450 85n49
fonds français MS 1669 29n5, 31n11,
31n12, 34n22, 35, 38, 39, 41
fonds français MS 2168 83n37
fonds français MS 19152 82n34, 84n42
fonds français MS 24364 77n16
fonds grec MS 1711 141n7
nouv. acq. fr. MS 1104 83n37
nouv. acq. fr. MS 4532 78

Princeton, NJ, Princeton University Library

Garrett Collection No. 140 92n7

San Marino, CA, Huntington Library

MS HM 28561 92n7

Shrewsbury School

MS 7 83n38

Vatican City, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana

Palat. Lat. MS 1971 82, 84n42

Winchester College

MS 33 92n8

Wolfenbüttel, Herzog August Bibliothek

Cod. Aug. MS 87,4 29n5, 31, 32, 33,
34n22, 35, 38, 39, 41

General Index

- Adam, 94, 147
 Adelstan, *see* Athelstan
 Aerts, W. J., 154n38
 Æthelred II, king of England, 61n15
 Africa/Affrike/Alfrike, 34, 35n26, 36, 64
 Agrafayn, Sir (character), 135
 Aigelond (character), 104n46, 105
 Ailes, Marianne, 4n9, 65, 76n9, 77n4, 79, 80, 83n39
 Aimeri de Narbonne, 66n28, 69, 80
 Albany, king of (character), 119
 Albertus Magnus, 110, 27
 Alcuin, 61
 Alemaigne, 33
 Alexander
 Alexander (character in *Cligés*), 3, 4, 5, 6, 7
 Alexander the Great, 30, 31, 88, 141n7
 Alexander the Great (character), 4n10, 14, 139–58
 Alexander the Great, legend of, 13, 151
 Alexander tradition, 141, 142, 143, 150
 Alexandre de Paris: *Roman d'Alexandre*, 141, 144n22, 145, 148n31, 151n35, 157
 Alexandriads, 139, 140, 141, 142n16, 151n35, 152
 Epistola Alexandri ad Aristotelem, 141, 142n10, 146, 151
 French *Prose Alexander*, 141, 144n21, 157
 Le Voyage d'Alexandre au Paradis Terrestre, 141, 151, 152
 Alexander II, Pope, 59, 61n15
 Alexandria, 30, 31, 32, 42
 Alfred of Hamelhamsted, 54n43
 Aline, Dame, 68
 Alior (character), 158
 Alis, emperor of Greece (character), 6
 Alisaundrine (character), 114, 15, 132
 Alphonse (character), 114, 115, 116
Altercatio Phyllidis et Florae, 162n17
 Aluredus, 54n43
Amadas et Ydoine, 86
 Amazons, 155
 Amiloun (character), 136, 137
 Amis (character), 136, 137
Amis and Amiloun, 66, 76, 127, 130, 136
Amis e Amilun, 77
 Amoraunt/Amorant (character), 29, 30, 31, 32, 33, 34n23, 35, 36, 41, 49
 Andrew, Malcolm, 121n21, 164n23
 Anelaf/Anelad (character), 33, 34, 41n40, 41n41
 Angier, Brother, scribe, 53
 Anlaf (character), 33, 34, 41n40, 41n41
 Anglo-Norman (language), 74, 75, 76, 77, 78, 79, 81, 84, 85, 86, 87, 88
 Anglo-Normans, 62
 Anglo-Norman *Alexander*, *see* Thomas of Kent: *Roman de toute chevalerie*
 Anglo-Saxons, 64
 Angres (character), 5
 Anne of Bohemia, 137
The Anonymous Short English Metrical Chronicle, 38n32
 Antioch, 30, 31, 49
 Apostles' Creed, 12, 94, 95, 97, 99, 100, 101, 102, 106, 107
 Apulia, 61
 Aquinas, Thomas, 110
 Arbuthnet, Alexander, 139
 Archibald, Elizabeth, 16n7, 83n38, 109n3
 Arcite (character), 126
 Aristotle, 154n38
 (character), 97, 142n14, 147, 148n31, 150, 151n35, 152, 153, 156
 Armenia, 121
 Armstrong, Edward C., 141n8
Arthour and Merlin, 67, 70, 84, 88n62
 Arthur, king (character), 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 20, 21n29, 26, 64, 84n45, 85n51, 122, 123, 135, 159, 161n15, 165, 167, 168, 170
 Arthurian court, 123, 159, 164, 165, 168, 169, 171, 172
 Arthurian legend, 84
 Arthurian material, 66n28, 84, 85, 87

The Exploitations of Medieval Romance

- Arundel, Bishop, 95, 100, 102, 106n51
Constitutions, 95
 Arveragus (character), 112
 Ashdown, M., 41n40
 Ashe, Laura, 3n7, 3n8, 63n18, 66
 Athelstan (Adelstan/Æthelstan), king of
 England, 9, 31, 33, 34, 35, 37, 38, 39, 40,
 41, 42, 64
Athelston, 86
 audience(s), 73, 74, 76, 81, 85, 87, 88, 97, 127,
 138, 143, 144
 Augspach, Elizabeth, 134n20
 Aulof/Aulofe (character), 33, 34, 41n40,
 41n41
 Aurelius (character), 111, 112, 123
The Awntyrs of Arthur, 70
- Babington, Churchill, 107n53
 Bacon, Roger, 110, 142n13
 Badby, John, 101, 102
 Balam/Balan (character), 68
 Balant, sultan (character), 104
 Baldick, Chris, 24n42
 Baker, A. T., 52n30
 Barbour, John, 143
 The Bruce, 143, 144
 Barlow, Frank, 58n5, 61n15
 Barney, Stephen A., 110n6
 Barron, W. R. J., 85n51, 85n52, 94n12, 171n34
 Basset, Philippa, 55n44
 Baswell, Christopher, 84n45
 Batt, Catherine, 85n51
Battle of Maldon, 163
 Bawcutt, Priscilla, 140n5
 Bayard (character), 70
 Bayot, Alphonse, 65n26
 Beauchamp family, 55n44; *see also* Guy de
 Beauchamp
 Beer, Frances, 60n9
 beheading game, 122, 164, 166, 167, 170
 Belgrade, 91
 Belisaunt (character), 136
 Bell, Alexander, 9n20
 Bell, David, 69n36
 Benedict IX, Pope, 117n15
 Benedict X, Pope, 59
 Bennett, Philip, 65n25
 Benoît de Sainte-Maure: *Chronique des ducs
 de Normandie*, 58n5
- Benson, Larry D., 24n41, 70n38, 110n7,
 154n38
Beowulf, 163
 Berard (character), 49
 Berry, Duke of, 121
 Bertilak, Sir (character), 122, 123
 Bethlehem, 49n20
 Bety's (character), 149
 Bevan, Rosie, 55n44
 Bevis of Hampton, Sir (character), 4n9, 66,
 77
 Bisaha, Nancy, 90n1
 Blancandrin (character), 60
 Blanciotti, Fr. Bonaventura, 102n39
 Blaess, Madeleine, 80n28, 84n44
 Blair, John, 52n30, 52n31, 52n32, 52n33, 53n36
 Blanks, David R., 90n1
Le Blasme des Fames, 83
 Bliss, A. J., 86n57
 Bloch, R. Howard, 21n24, 21n25, 24
 Blumenfeld-Kosinski, Renate, 43n3
 Boccaccio, Giovanni, 126, 127
 Decameron, 15n3
 Teseida, 126
 Bödtker, A. Trampe, 113n11
 Boer, Walter W., 142n10
 Boeve (character), 50
Boeve de Haumtone, 4n9, 8n16, 30n6, 30n9,
 33n19, 35n29, 50, 65, 66, 67, 78, 147
 Bohort (character), 117n16
 Bohun, Sir Humphrey de, 86, 114
 Boitani, Piero, 24n43
Le Bone Florence, 83, 89
 Boogaard, Nico van den, 15n2, 15n3, 16n6,
 17n8, 19n18, 19n19, 20n22, 22n31
 Bordesley Abbey, 84n44, 66n27, 80n28
 Bordesley donation, 66, 69
 Bors (character), 64
 Bos, Alphonse, 52n30
 Bose, Mishtooni, 102n39, 106n50, 107n53
 Bossuat, Robert, 57
 Boulton, Maureen B. M., 68n33, 74n3
 Braunde (character), 115, 116
 Bretons, 23
 Breuer, Hermann, 167n30
 Brewer, Derek, 16n7, 86
 Brewer, Elisabeth, 164, 165, 166, 167n31
 Britain, 5, 28, 35, 40, 64n23, 69n37, 161
 British Isles, 25n1

General Index

- Britons, 35
 Brittany, 111
 Brook, Leslie C., 15n1, 16n6, 17n9, 18n12, 18n13, 18n14, 20n23, 21n27, 22n31
 Brooke, C. N. L., 19n17, 53n35
 Brunanburh, 33, 34, 36, 39, 40
 Brundage, James A., 48n17
 Brunner, K., 83n40
 Bucephalus, 156
The Buik of Alexander, 139, 141n8
The Buik of Phisnomy, see Hay, Sir Gilbert
 Bunt, Gerrit H. V., 86n54, 114n12, 131, 148, 154n38, 157n42
 Burgess, Glyn S., 2n4, 15n1, 16n6, 17n9, 18n11, 18n12, 18n13, 18n14, 20n23, 21n27, 22n31, 60n12
 Burgoigne, 33
 Burnley, J. D., 67n29, 75n7
 Burrows, Montagu, 54n40
 Bury St Edmunds, abbey of, 54n42
 Busby, Keith, 15n1, 69, 84n43, 85n49, 113n11
 Buschinger, Danielle, 19n16
 Byzantium, see Constantinople
- Caie, Graham, 148n31
 Cain, James, 63n18
 Calabria, 61
 Calin, William, 48, 66
 Calkins, Robert G., 128n9, 129, 130
 Callisthenes of Olynthus, 141n7
 Calvet, Jean, 57n1
 Cambridge University, 99
 Campbell, Duncan, seventh laird of Glenorchy, 140
 Candace (character), 149, 151n35
 Canterbury, 59
 Capricorn, 157
Capystranus, 91, 100
 Capistranus, Friar Johan (character), 91
 Carados (character), 165, 166, 168, 169
Carduino, 118n17
 Carley, James P., 85
 Carroll, Carleton W., 163n19
 Cartlidge, Neil, 8, 10n23, 12, 13, 23n33, 25n47, 45n8, 48n15, 48n18, 163n19
 Cartwright, John, 139, 143, 144, 145, 147, 151n35, 151n36, 152n37
 Cary, George, 141n7, 141n9, 142n13
 Casquero, Manuel-A. Marcos, 110n6
- Cassamus (character), 149
 Castleford, Thomas, 38n32
 catechesis, 96, 97, 100, 107
 catechism, 96, 98, 99
 Catto, J. L., 54n40, 54n43
 Caughey, Anna, 13, 14
 Caxton, William, 70, 74, 91, 92, 94, 99, 100
 Charles the Grete, 91, 92, 94, 99, 100, 103, 104n45, 104n46
 Ceigne, see Saxon
 Certeau, Michel de, 126, 127, 131
 Chandès, Gerard, 108n2
La Chanson d'Aspremont, 66n28, 68, 69, 71, 80n28
La Chanson d'Aye d'Avignon, 68n32
La Chanson de Basin, 69n37
La Chanson de Guillaume/Chançon de Willame, 53n38, 63, 65, 66n28, 68, 79, 80n28
La Chanson de Mainet, 66, 68
La Chanson de Roland, 54n40, 57, 59, 60, 61n14, 63, 65, 70, 79, 163
La Chanson de St Alexis, 44
chansons de geste, 4, 10, 28, 36n30, 44, 45, 46, 60, 62, 63, 64, 65, 66, 67, 68, 69, 70, 71, 72, 74, 79, 80, 81, 83, 86, 90, 91, 101
 Charlemagne, Holy Roman Emperor, 30, 57, 58, 59, 60, 61, 62, 63, 68, 71, 72, 81, 90, 91, 103, 104, 105
 'Charlemagne and Roland', 80n29, 81, 86
 Charlemagne cycle, 79, 80n29
 Charlemagne romances, see romances
 Charles VII, king of France, 154n38
Le Chastoieiment, 82n34
 Chaucer, Alice, 70
 Chaucer, Geoffrey, 15n3, 21, 23n40, 24n41, 70, 73, 82, 108n2, 109n3, 111, 112, 126, 127n6, 156n41
 The Book of the Duchess, 70, 82
 The Canterbury Tales, 16n3, 21n26
 The Franklin's Tale, 16n7, 83n38, 111, 112, 116, 117, 118, 122, 123, 124
 The Knight's Tale, 126
 The Merchant's Tale, 15n3
 The Monk's Tale, 70, 156n41
 The Nun's Priest's Tale, 70
 The Parson's Tale, 110, 112
 The Shipman's Tale, 21, 24n41, 70
 Troilus and Criseyde, 154n38
 Chênerie, Marie-Luce, 20n21

The Exploitations of Medieval Romance

- Cheney, C. R., 45n9
 Chestre, Thomas, 82, 116
 Sir Launfal, 16n7, 21n28, 82, 86, 127, 130, 135
Le Chevalere Assigne, 85
Le Chevalier au cygne, 71n41, 85
Le Chevalier qui fist les cons parler, 15–27
 chivalry, 4n10, 14, 63, 64, 71, 72, 122, 123, 143, 145, 146, 150, 158–63, 165, 169–72
 Chrétien de Troyes, 1, 2n2, 3n3, 3, 5, 6, 7, 8, 12, 66, 84n43, 85, 108n2, 164, 165n27
 Cligés, 1, 2n2, 3, 4, 5n13, 7, 8, 12
 Erec and Enide, 2
 Perceval (Le Conte du Graal), 68n33, 85, 117n16, 165n27
 Christ, 49, 50, 61n15, 90, 91, 93, 94, 97, 99, 101, 103, 106n51, 140, 147, 167, 169, 171
 Christ Church, 53n35
 Christendom, 49n19, 60, 81, 88
 Christianity, 14, 44, 64, 71, 94n12, 98, 103, 104, 105, 106, 147, 160, 163, 171, 172
 Christian(s), 11, 30n8, 44, 45, 59, 60, 63, 64, 69, 71, 93, 103, 104, 123, 171
 Christina of Markyate, 45n8
 Christine de Pisan, 131
 Christmas, 61n15, 122, 168, 169, 171
 chronicle(s), 6, 7, 9, 74, 78, 83, 85, 98, 160, 161n15, 163
 Church, the, 44, 59
 Church, the English, 60n13, 61n14
 'Chyvaler de Coun', 23
 Circe, 109
 Cirencester, 63
 Clark, S. L., 168n32
 Classen, Albrecht, 118n18, 121n20
 Clermont, Council of, 60n8
 Clifford, Rosamond, 137
 Cligés (character), 4, 5, 6, 7
 Cloetta, Wilhem, 46n10
 Colbrond (character), 34n23, 39
 Colchester, 9
 Colebrant (character), 28, 29, 33, 34, 35, 36, 39, 41n41, 49, 64
 Colgrim (character), 35
 Colker, Marvin, 99n26
 Colvin, Howard, 129, 130n13, 137
 Combarieu, Micheline de, 44, 45, 46
 Comestor, Peter: *Historia Scholastica*, 98
 Compostela, 104, 105
 Conde, Juan Camilo Silvestre, 109n3
 Constantinople (Byzantium), 29n3, 30, 31, 32, 49n19, 71, 90, 91, 93, 113, 114, 148
 Constable, Giles, 45n9, 48n16
 Conquest, the Norman, 9, 42, 59n8, 72
 Cooper, Helen, 16n5, 19n17, 21n26, 25n47, 26n48, 48n14, 48n18, 75n5, 91, 111, 113
 Copeland, Rita, 107n52
 Court of Love, 148n31, 149, 150
 Cowan, Ian B., 140n3
 Cowdrey, H. E. J., 59n6
 Cowell, Andrew, 21n25
 Cowen, Janet M., 79, 80n29, 81n31, 86n56, 94, 95
 Craigie, W. A., 142n15
 Crane, Susan, 3n7, 44n8, 48
 Crescenzi, Piero de, 127, 128n9, 129, 130, 131, 135n21
 Crouch, D., 11n28, 162n18
The Crusade and Death of Richard I, 83, 164n22
 crusades, 44, 71
 crusaders, 44, 49
 crusading, 48
 First Crusade, 44, 59, 60n9, 61
 Cúchulainn (character), 165
 Cullayne, 64n23
 Cupid, 113, 149
Cursor Mundi, 88n62
 Curtius, E. R., 125, 129
Le Cycle des barons révoltés, 63
Le Cycle du roi, 71
 Dame d'Amour (character), 116, 117
 Damian, Peter, 45
 Danes, 34, 35, 40, 64
 Daniel, Norman, 101
 Dares (character), 144, 145, 146, 155
 Darius ('Daire'), 30, 31
 Daun Russell (character), 70
 David/Dauyd, 102, 103n40, 107
 Davies, R. R., 6n14
 Davis, Norman, 92n8
 Davis, R. H. C., 62n17
 Dean, Ruth J., 68, 69, 74, 75, 76n9, 76n11, 77, 78, 79, 80, 82n33, 82n34, 83, 84n42, 84n46, 85, 87, 89
 Decalogue, 99
 Delbouille, Maurice, 142n14

General Index

- Denmark, 34, 36
Déprez, Eugène, 159n1
De Regimine Principum, 142
De Spiritu Guidonis, 98
La Destruction de Rome, 68, 69
Diamond, Arlyn, 12, 138
Dickens, A. G., 40
Dickinson, J. C., 53n35
Dickson, Morgan, 16n7, 47n13, 51n26, 83n38, 138n29
Dimmick, Jeremy, 107n52
Dindimus (character), 146, 154, 155
Diogenes (character), 155
disputation, 96–9, 105, 107
Djordjević, Ivana, 4n9, 8, 9, 10, 66n27, 76, 79
Doctrinale Antiquitatum Fidei Catholicae Ecclesiae, 102n39
D'Oilli family, 53, 55n44
 Henry d'Oilli II, 53n39, 54n44
 Margery d'Oilli, 54n44
Donald, A. K., 118n18
Donovan, Mortimer J., 18n15
Doon de Mayence, 66n28, 80
Doon de Nanteuil, 66n28, 80
Dor, Juliette, 148n32
Dorigen (character), 111, 112, 122
Douglas, Gavin: *Eneados*, 145n25
Dover, 82
Drake, Graham, 9n22
Drescher, Horst W., 143n18
Dry Tree, the, 147
Dublin, 11, 34, 40
Dubius (character), 92n8
'Duce de Basyns', *see* *Chanson de Basin*
Duggan, Joseph J., 54n40, 60n9
Duke Rowland and Sir Otuell of Spayne, 70, 80, 92n7, 103n44
Dunbar, William, 143
Duncan, Frederick, 62n16
Dunning, Eric, 26n49
Durazzo ('Durras'), 30, 30n7, 31, 32n13
Durkan, John, 140n3
Dyer, Christopher, 128, 138

Ebrauc (character), 38
Edward, the Black Prince, 160, 163
Edward Ætheling, 61n15
Edward the Confessor, king of England, 61n15
Edward the Elder, king of the Anglo-Saxons, 61n15
Edward II, king of England, 69
Edward III, king of England, 159, 160
Egypt, 32
Eleanor, countess of Leicester, 137
Eleanor of Castile, 137
Eleanor of Provence, 137
Eley, Penny, 112n9
Elias, Norbert, 26n49
Elliott, Dyan, 25n47
Ellis, Roger, 73n1, 75n7
Elynas (character), 121
Elyne (character), 117
Emaré, 86, 89
Emily/Emilia (character), 126, 127
Emmaus, 50
England, 9, 10, 29, 32, 33, 35, 39, 42, 48, 49, 51, 57, 59, 61–4, 66–75, 79, 80, 84, 85, 87, 88, 89, 92, 99, 101, 121, 127n7, 159, 161n13, 162
 Anglo-Norman England, 73, 74
 Engleterre, 32, 33
English (people), 11, 34, 58, 62, 70, 161n13
English (language), 36, 38, 40n38, 63, 68, 69, 70, 74, 79, 85, 88, 89
Englishness, 32, 62n17
Middle English, 9, 10, 33n20, 34n22, 35, 37, 38, 39, 41, 44n8, 64, 66, 67, 68, 72, 74, 76, 77, 78, 79, 81, 83, 86, 87, 88, 94, 96, 97, 99, 100, 104, 135
Ensler, Eve: *The Vagina Monologues*, 15
Entrée d'Espagne, 101
Epistola Alexandri ad Aristotelem, *see* Alexander
Erec (character), 7
Erickson, C. T., 21n30
The Erle of Tolous, 89, 138
Ermenfrid of Sitten, 60
Erskine, Lord Thomas, 140, 143, 155
Erskine family, 143, 148, 152
Espagne, 33
Espire (Speyer), 32n16
L'Estoire de Charlemagne, 80n29
Ethiopia, 30, 31, 32
Eucharist, 101
Eudo (character), 117n15
Euerwic (York), 37, 38, 38n33, 39, 41n41

The Exploitations of Medieval Romance

- Europe, 28, 60, 62, 69, 71, 90, 91, 92, 109n3, 128n10, 129, 143
- Europeans, 62
- Evans, Dafydd, 18n11
- Evans, Ralph, 54n43
- Everwic (York), 37, 38, 38n33, 39, 41n41
- Everswell, 129, 130
- Evrain (character), 117
- Ewert, Alfred, 15n1, 28n2, 29n5, 34, 44n8, 54n44, 64n21
- Ewarwic/Ewerwic (York), 37, 38, 38n33, 39, 41n41
- Fair Unknown story, 117n16
- Fall, the, 147
- fairy, fairies, 15, 16, 19, 20, 21, 22, 24, 25, 27, 111, 113, 118, 119, 120, 121, 122
- fairy gifts, 18
- fairy mistress, 8, 19, 114, 116, 117, 135
- Fanous, Samuel, 45n8
- Fantosome, Jordan, 6n14, 62, 63n18
- Chronicle*, 6n14, 63n18, 66
- Farrier, Susan E., 93n10
- Faust, 117
- Fawre (character), 32n15
- Fein, Susanna, 15n3
- Felice (character), 37, 55, 64
- Fellows, Jennifer, 3n7, 4n9, 16n7, 51n26, 66n27, 79, 80n29, 83n38, 134n20, 138n29
- Femynee, 155
- Fenice (character), 3, 12, 13, 47
- Ferakutte (character), 93, 94, 96, 97, 98, 99, 100, 101, 102, 103, 105, 106, 107
- Fergus*, 68n33, 87
- Fernagu (character), 94n12, 95, 100
- Ferrante, Joan, 135n21
- Field, P. J. C., 64n22, 85n47
- Field, Rosalind, 3n7, 3n8, 10n25, 11, 29n5, 43n2, 48n15, 51n26, 51n28, 55n45, 67, 73, 76n8, 76n9, 77, 79, 81n31, 84n45, 85n51, 85n53, 95
- Fierabras (character), 65, 70, 81
- Fierabras*, 66n28, 69, 70, 71, 79, 80n27, 80n28, 88, 98
- Firumbras*, 80, 86n56, 92n7, 103, 104n46; *see also* Sir Ferumbras
- Firumbras (character), 103
- First Crusade, *see* crusades
- Flanagan, Marie Therese, 10n25
- Fled Bricrend (The Feast of Bricriu)*, 164, 165n25
- Flint, Valerie I. J., 108n3
- Flodden, 145
- Floire et Blancheflor*, 82, 84n42
- Floripas (character), 103
- Floris and Blancheflur*, 77n15, 89
- Folies Tristan*, 87
- Fouke le Fitz Waryn*, 77n14, 86
- Foulke, William Dudley, 54n42
- Fourre Sonnes of Aymon*, 92n7
- Foster, Edward E., 136n23
- Foulet, Alfred, 141n8
- Foxe, John: *Acts and Monuments*, 101n36
- France, 33, 57, 65, 66, 67, 69, 71, 103, 104, 114, 145, 154n38, 160, 161
- Franci*, 62n17
- Francophonía, 69
- Franklin (character), 112
- Franks, 62
- Frassetto, Michael, 90n1
- French (language), 2, 5n13, 15, 18n11, 18n13, 36n30, 37, 53, 60n9, 66, 67, 68, 69, 70, 71, 73, 74, 75, 77, 79, 80n29, 82, 83, 85, 86, 88, 108n2, 112, 114, 118, 121n19, 129, 130, 132, 135, 139, 140, 141, 142, 144n21, 148n31, 154n38, 163, 165n27
- insular French, 3, 4, 10, 11, 69, 74, 75; *see also* Anglo-Norman
- French (people), 62n17, 161n13
- Frideswide, St, 10, 52, 53, 55
- priory of St Frideswide, 53, 54
- Vita St Frediswidæ*, 54
- Froimond (character), 120
- Froissart, Jean, 68n31
- Fuerre de Gadres*, 141
- Fulcher of Chartres, 61, 62
- Gesta Francorum Jerusalem Expugnantium*, 62n16
- Fulk FitzWarin (character), 66
- Fulk Nerra, count of Anjou, 44
- Furnivall, Frederick, 102n37, 102n38
- Furrow, Melissa, 4, 10, 79
- Gaimar, Geffrei, 9, 58n5, 78, 85, 88
- Estoire des Engleis*, 9n18, 78, 88
- Galahad (character), 64
- Galely, 64n23
- Galent-Fasseur, Valérie, 44, 50n23

General Index

- Galicia, 104, 105
 Gallais, Pierre, 16n4, 18n10, 23
Gamelyn, 89
 Ganelon (character), 6, 63, 68n32, 70, 103
 Garcy, 103n44
 garden(s), 12, 125, 126, 127, 128, 129, 130, 131, 133–8
 Garese, 64n23
 Garnett, George, 59n8, 61n15
 Gaul, 62
 Gawain (character), 14, 65, 118, 121, 122, 123, 135, 136, 167, 168, 169, 170, 171, 172
 Gawain-poet, the, 14, 159, 164, 169, 170
 Gawain romances, *see* romances
 Gaydon (character), 46, 47
 Gee, Loveday Lewes, 137
 Geffray of the Great Tooth (character), 120, 121
 Geoffrey of Monmouth, 3, 5, 16n5, 35, 64n23, 75n5
 Historia Regum Britannie, 64n23
 Gerald of Wales (Giraldus Cambrensis),
 Expugnatio Hibernica, 11n28
 Gerbert (character), 19n17, 117n15
 ‘Gesta Guydonis de Burgundia’, 81n32
Geste d’Alisaundre, *see* Thomas of Kent:
 Roman de toute chevalerie
 Ghosh, Kantik, 101n35
 Gilbert, Jane, 16n7
 Gillingham, John, 10n25, 161, 164n22
Girard de Vienne, 66n28, 80
 Girvan, R., 142n17
 Given-Wilson, C., 92n9
 Glastonbury Abbey, 85
 God of Mirth (character), 128
 Godfrey of Bouillon, 71n41
Golagros and Gawane, 143, 145
 Goliath/Golias (character), 102, 103n40, 107n53
 Gollancz, I., 102n38
 Goody, Jack, 128, 129
 Goossens, Jan, 15n3
 Gormont (character), 63
Gormont et Isebart, 63, 65, 68, 69, 79
 Gower, John, 87
 Gowther, Sir (character), 120
Graelent, *see* *Lai de Graelent*
 Graelent (character), 20n20, 20n23
 Grafton, Anthony, 106n50
 Grail, quest of the Holy, 10, 64, 163
 Grail Castle, 117n16
 Gravdal, Kathryn, 18n13
 Greater India (‘Inde la Maur’), 30, 31, 32
 Greece, 1, 2, 3, 6, 30, 109, 152
 Greeks, 30
 Green, D. H., 2n5
 Green Chapel, 122, 123
 Green Knight (character), 14, 121, 122, 123, 167, 168, 169, 170, 171, 172
 Gregory VI, Pope, 117n15
 Gregory VII, Pope, 117n15
 Gregory, Stewart, 2n2, 11n28, 162n18
 Grieve, Patricia, 82n33
 Griffith, David, 85n53
Gui de Nanteuil, 66n28
Gui de Warewic, 8, 9, 10, 28, 29n5, 30n6, 30n9, 33n19, 34n25, 35, 36, 37, 38n33, 41n41, 42, 43, 44, 46, 47, 50, 51, 53, 54, 64, 66, 72, 76n9, 77, 83n39, 88
 Gui de Warewic (character), 28, 29, 30, 31, 32, 33, 35, 37, 41, 43, 45, 46, 47, 48, 49, 52, 53, 55, 64
 Guiac (character), 51
 Guibert de Nogent, 44, 49
 Gesta Dei per Francos, 44n6
 Guido, archbishop of Tripoli, 142n13
 Guillaume de Berneville: *La Vie de Saint Gilles*, 52n30
 Guillaume de Lorris, 131
 Guillaume de Machaut: *Remède de Fortune*, 127
 Guillaume d’Orange (William Short-Nose), 44, 45, 47, 79, 80n28
Guillaume d’Orange, 66n28
Guillaume de Palerne, 85, 114
 Guinevere (character), 119, 135, 169
 Gulad/Gunlaf (character), 34, 41n41
 Guntram, King (character), 54n42
 Guthfrith, 34, 40
 Guy, Bishop of Amiens: *Carmen de Hastingae Proelio*, 58n5, 61n15
 Guy de Beauchamp, earl of Warwick, 66n28, 69, 80, 84n44, 116
Guy de Nanteuil, 80
Guy de Warwik (French prose romance), 72
Guy of Warwick, 9, 29n5, 32n14, 34n21, 41n41, 43n2, 44n8, 47n13, 48n15, 49n20, 51n28, 70, 76, 79, 85n53, 86
Guy of Warwick (stanzaic), 66, 67, 70

The Exploitations of Medieval Romance

- Guy of Warwick (character), 39, 41, 49n20, 66
- Guy of Warwick, story of, 9, 10, 37n31, 41
- Guzlaf (character), 34, 41n41
- Gyeryes, Sir (character), 135
- Hades, 108
- hagiography, *see* saints' lives
- Hahn, Stacey L., 18n18
- Hahn, Thomas, 16n7
- Halsey, Richard, 53n37
- Hamel, Mary, 64n23
- Hanawalt, Barbara, 127n7
- Hanley, Catherine, 112n9
- Hanna, Ralph, 29, 76n10
- Hanning, Robert, 135n21
- Harding, Carol, 55n44
- Hardman, Phillipa, 81n31, 94, 95
- Harold II (Godwineson), king of England, 59
- Harper-Bill, C., 43n4
- Hary: *Actis and Deidis of Schir William Wallace*, 144, 145
- Hastings, 58, 59, 62
- Hathaway, E. J., 86n58
- Hautdesert, 122, 123
- Haveloc*, *see* *Lai d'Haveloc*
- Haveloc (character), 9
- Havelok, story of, 78, 84
- Havelok the Dane*, 9, 77, 78, 87n60, 88
- Havely, N. R., 127n6
- Havens, Jill C., 106n50
- Hay, Sir Gilbert, 140, 142n15, 142n16, 144n20, 145, 147, 151n35, 154n38
- The Buik of King Alexander the Conquerour*, 13, 14, 139–52, 154, 156, 157, 158
- The Buke of the Gouvernance of Princis*, 145
- The Buke of the Law of Armys*, 145
- The Buke of the Ordre of Knychthede*, 143, 145
- The Buke of Phisnomy*, 140n3, 142, 150, 151
- Heal, Felicity, 127n7, 138
- Healy, John F., 109n4
- Hector, 30
- Hemming, T. D., 60n12
- Henderson, George, 65n25
- Henguist (character), 35
- Henri d'Andeli: *Le Lai d'Aristote*, 142n14, 148n31, 150
- Henry, the Young King (son of Henry II), 163
- Henry II, king of England, 6n14, 10, 62, 120
- Henry III, king of England, 137, 162
- Henry IV, king of England, 101n36
- Henry VI, king of England, 71
- Henry of Huntingdon, 58n5
- Henry the Minstrel, *see* Hary
- Herald (character), 33
- heresy, 102, 104, 105, 106, 110
- Hermans, Jos. M. M., 154n38
- Hermes Trismegistus, 111
- Herrtage, Sidney J. H., 91n3, 94n11, 103n42
- Herzman, Ronald B., 9n21
- Hesdin, 129
- Heslop, T. A., 53n37
- Hieatt, Constance, 69n37
- Hilka, Alfons, 141n6
- Hines, John, 15n3
- Historia de Preliis*, 141n6, 144n22, 157
- Historia Karoli Magni et Rotholandi, ou Chronique du Pseudo-Turpin*, 93n10, 100
- historiography, 6, 75, 91; *see also* saints' lives
- The History of William Marshal*, 162, 164n21, 164n22
- Hoccleve, Thomas, 101, 102
- The Regement of Princes*, 102n37
- To Sir John Oldcastle*, 102n38
- Holden, A. J., 2, 11, 38, 50, 51n25, 29, 54n44, 58n5, 86n58, 162n18
- Holland (Lincolnshire county), 9
- Hollier, Denis, 60n9
- Holt, J. C., 10n25
- Holy Ghost, 103
- Holy Land, 48, 49, 71
- Holy Roman Emperor, 51, 62
- Holy Scriptures, 107
- Holy See, 59
- Holy War, 44
- Honorius Augustodunensis: *Elucidarius*, 98, 99
- Hopkins, Amanda, 113n9
- Horn, The Romance of*, *see* Thomas
- Horn (character), 4, 5, 50, 77, 78, 84
- Horn Childe*, 67, 78
- Horrox, Rosemary, 161n14

General Index

- Horryble (character), 120
 Hors (character), 35
 household, 126, 127, 130, 131, 133, 134, 137, 138, 143
 Hudson, Anne, 106n51
 Hue de Rotelande, 76, 87
 Ipomedon, 76, 87
 Protheselaus, 87
 Hudson, Harriet, 86n55
 'Huet de Culet', 23
 Hugh I of Burgundy, 43
Hunbaut, 167, 170
 Hundred Years' War, 72
 Hunelaf (character), 33, 34, 41n40, 41n41
 Hungary, 90
 Hunlaf (character), 4
 Hunyadi, Janos (character), 91
Huon de Bordeaux, 147
Huon of Bourdeaux, 92n7
 Huws, Daniel, 34n21
- Ihle, Sandra, 113n11
 Ile de Ore, 116
 'Incisor-ferri', *see* Taillefer
 India, 34n23; *see also* Greater India; Ynde
 Innocent III, Pope, 48
Ipomadon, 76
 Ireland, 6n14, 10, 11, 34, 40, 41, 161n10
 Irish (people), 11
 Isabella of France, 69
 Isidore of Seville: *Etymologiae*, 110
 Islam, 65, 90n1, 91n4, 91n6, 92, 101n34
 Israel, 103n40
 Italy, 61n14, 69, 90
Iter ad Paradisum, 141n9
- Jackson, W. T. H., 2n5
 Jaeger, C. Stephen, 160
 James II, king of Scotland, 142n15, 144, 148
 James III, king of Scotland, 144
 James IV, king of Scotland, 144, 145, 147
 James V, king of Scotland, 144
 James VI, king of Scotland, 144
 James, M. R., 19n17
 Jean d'Arras, 25n47, 118n18, 121
 Mélusine, 118n18, 25n47
 Jean le Bel: *Chronique*, 159n1, 160
 Jenkins, T. Atkinson, 166n29
- Jephcott, Edmund, 26n49
 Jerusalem, 30, 31, 32, 41n41, 44, 48, 49, 57, 60n11, 61, 62, 71n41, 91, 155
 Jews, 106n50
 John (character), 13
 John III, duke of Naples, 141n6
 John XXII, Pope, 160
 John the Damascene: *Barlam and Jehosophat*, 99
 John of Salisbury, 97
 Metalogicon, 97n19
 John of Spain, 142n13
 Johnston, R. C., 6n14, 63n18, 83n41, 164n22
 Jolly, Karen, 109n3
 Jonas, count (character), 30n7, 30n8, 32, 33, 49
 Jones, C. Meredith, 93n10, 104n47, 106n50
Joseph d'Arimathie, 66n28, 84n44
Joseph of Arimathie, 84
 Josiane (character), 50
 Julius Caesar ('Iulius Sesar'), 158
- Kaeuper, Richard W., 160n4, 160n6, 160n9
 Kay, Sarah, 63, 66
 Keen, Maurice, 159n2, 160, 162n16
 Kelly, Henry Ansgar, 154n38
 Kempe, Margery, 49
 Kennedy, Edward Donald, 85n47
 Ker, N. R., 16n3, 54n40
 Kerth, Thomas, 21n30
 Kibler, William W., 2n3
 Kieckhefer, Richard, 108n3
King Horn, 10, 34n25, 70, 77, 78
King Richard (Richard Cœur de Lion), 67, 70, 76n12, 77n15, 83, 87
King of Tars, 67, 70
 kingship, 4, 6, 7, 9, 14, 143, 144, 146, 150, 152, 155, 158, 161n15
Kitâb al-mahâsin wal-addâd, 142n14
 Klausner, David, 44n8
 Knighton, Henry, 92
 Knighton's Chronicle, 92n9
 Knowles, David, 53n35
 Komroff, Manuel, 142n12
 Kooper, Erik, 113n11
 Kosovo, 90
 Krey, August C., 62n16
Kyng Alisaunder, 77, 147, 154n38

The Exploitations of Medieval Romance

- Labande, Edmond-René, 49n21
Lacnunga (Leechbooks), 110
 La Coudrette (character), 118n18
 Lacy, Norris J., 5n13, 163n19
 La Du, Milan S., 141n9
 Lady of Synadoun (character), 117, 118
Lai d'Aristote, see Henri d'Andeli
Lai de Graelent, 15, 16n6, 17n8, 17n9, 18, 19, 20n20, 20n23, 21n27, 21n28, 22n31, 23n36, 23n38, 25, 27, 83
Lai d'Haveloc, 9, 66, 78, 85
Lai du Cor, 21n30
laisses, 65, 66, 67
 lamia, 120
 Lancelot (character), 4n10, 7, 161n15, 166, 167, 168, 169
Lancelot (Prose), see *Prose Lancelot*
Lancelot of the Laik, 84, 143
 Landsberg, Sylvia, 125n1, 127
 Langtoft, Peter: *Chronicle*, 78, 85
 Lanval (character), 8n15, 17, 19, 20, 22, 26, 119
 Laskaya, Anne, 135n22
 Launfal, Sir (character), 135, 136
 Lawson, Sarah, 131n16
 Lawton, David, 79, 85n52
 Lecouteux, Claude, 115n13
 Le Gentil, Pierre, 60n9, 61n14
 Legge, M. Dominica, 10n25, 43, 53n38, 43n1, 75n4
 Léglu, Catherine, 121n19
 Leo IX, Pope, 59
 Leo of Naples, 141n6
 Le Person, M., 80n27
 Levine, Robert, 63n18
 Leyser, Henrietta, 45n8
 Lincoln, 9
 Lindsey, 9
 Liu, Yin, 55n44
Livre de Reis de Brittanie, 83n39
 Lochrie, Karma, 21n29
 Loheregne, 33
 Lollard(s), 12, 92, 93, 100, 101, 102, 106, 107
 London (Londres/Lundres), 38, 39, 41, 131
 London, Vera C., 53n35
 Longtin, Mario, 112n9
 Lorraine, 53
 Loud, Graham, 62n17
 Louis I, emperor, son of Charlemagne, 60, 63
 Lovelich, Henry, 84
 Loyn, H. R., 59n8, 60n13, 61n14
Lucidus and Dubius, 92n8
 Lucius, emperor (character), 64
 Lupack, Alan, 16n7
 Lusignan, 119, 120, 121
 Luttrell, Claude, 2, 165n26
 Lybeaus (character), 116, 117, 118
Lybeaus Desconus, 84, 113n9, 116, 123, 124
 Lydgate, John: *Siege of Thebes*, 156
 Lynch, Michael, 140n3
 Mabonagrain (character), 117
 Maboun (character), 117
 McDiarmid, Matthew, 140
 MacDonald, A. A., 140n3
 MacDougall, Elisabeth B., 128n9, 129n12, 130n13, 130n14
 McGarry, Daniel D., 97n19
 Machamye (character), see Mehmed II, Sultan
 McLean, Teresa, 127n8, 130n13, 137
 McMillan, Duncan, 53n38
 McNiven, Peter, 101n36
 Macrae-Gibson, O. D., 88n62
 McSheffrey, Shannon, 131
 McSparran, Frances, 82n35
 magic, 12, 22, 108, 109, 110, 111, 112, 113, 114, 115, 120, 121, 122, 123, 124, 144, 171
 magical arts, 109, 111, 112, 114, 116, 118, 119
 Magog, 103n41
 Magoun, Francis Peabody, 141n6
 Mahaut, daughter of Robert d'Artois, 137
 'Mahovin', 147
Mainet, see *La Chanson de Mainet*
 Mainet (character), 68
 Malory, Sir Thomas, 64, 65, 70, 85
Le Morte Darthur, 25n47, 26n48, 64, 65, 70
 Mandeville, Sir John: *Travels*, 142
 Mannyng, Robert, 38n32
 Map, Walter, 25n47, 62, 117n15
De Nugis Curialium, 19n17, 25n47, 46
 Mapstone, Sally, 140, 142n15, 144n16, 150
 Mar, 143
 Marc, king of Cornwall (character), 3, 7
 Marco Polo: *Il Milione*, 142, 151n35
 Margaret of Anjou, 71

General Index

- Marie de France, 8, 15, 17, 18, 23, 24, 26, 27,
82, 83, 113, 115
Lais, 19, 23, 24, 83, 135n21
Bisclavret, 18n15, 115
Equitan, 18n15
Guigemar, 23n39, 113
Lai le Freine, 83
Lanval, 8, 15, 16n6, 16n7, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22,
23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 82, 83, 113, 134, 135n21
- Martin, F. X., 11n28
- Martin, G. H., 92n9
- Martin, Joanna, 140n5, 143n19, 145, 154,
157n42
- Mary, 122
- Mason, Emma, 54n44
- Mathilde, wife of William the Conqueror,
61n15
- Matter of Britain, 72, 84, 85
- Matter of England, 72
- Matter of France, 79, 80, 81
- Matthews, David, 84n43
- Maurice de Sully, 45
- Meale, Carol M., 3n7, 9n22, 69n37, 70n39,
80n29, 134n20
- Medea, 109
- Mehmed II, Sultan, 90, 91, 93
- Melayne, Duke of (character), 103
- Melior (character), 112, 113, 114, 115, 119, 121,
131, 132
- Melusine (character), 118n18, 119, 120, 121
- Melusine*, 113n9, 118n18, 123, 124
- Melusine, Roman de*, *see* Jean d'Arras
- Melville, 4n10
- Ménard, Philippe, 44n7
- Mertes, Kate, 138
- Meyer, Paul, 52n30, 53n38
- Micha, Alexandre, 15n1, 163n19
- Middle East, 28
- Middleton, Margaret, 68n31
- Middleton, Roger, 68n31
- Millar-Heggie, Bonnie, 91n4
- Mills, Kenneth, 106n50
- Mills, Maldwyn, 3n7, 16n7, 34n21, 56n21,
80n29, 116n14, 118n17, 134n20
- Mireaux, Émile, 61n14
- Mitchell, Lynette, 4n10
- Mohammed, 92, 102; *see also* 'Mahovin'
- Moniage Guillaume*, 44, 45, 46, 46n10
- Mooney, Linne, 53n38
- Mordred (character), 5
- Morgan le Fay (character), 122, 123
- Morris, Richard, 88n62
- Morte Arthur*, Stanzaic, 84
- Morte Arthure*, 64n23, 65n24, 70
- La Mort le Roi Artu*, 84n44
- Moses, 63
- Murad II, Sultan, 90
- Muslims, 106n50
- Mynors, R. A. B., 19n17, 58n3
- Naissance du Chevalier au Cygne*, 85
- Narbonne, Council of, 59
- Nativitas et Victoria Alexandri Magni*, *see*
Historia de Preliis
- Nazareth, 64n23
- necromancy, 110, 111
- Nero, 64n23
- Netter, Thomas, 102n39, 106n50
- New Testament, 147
- Nicholas (character), 144, 146
- Nicholas II, Pope, 59
- nigromancy, 111, 112, 113, 114, 115, 117
- Nine Worthies, 30, 31, 32, 152
- Nitze, William A., 166n29
- Nixon, Terry, 85n49
- Nolan, Barbara, 15n3, 24, 25
- Noomen, Willem, 15n2, 16n6, 17n8, 19n18,
19n19, 20n22, 22n31
- Norman Conquest, the, 9, 42, 59n8, 72
- Normanitas*, 62n17
- Normans, 57, 58, 61, 62
- Norsemen, 40, 41
- Northumberland, 28, 37, 38, 39, 40, 41
- Northumbria, 34, 40, 41n40
- Norway, 34n22, 40
- Nota Emilianense*, 60
- Octavian, emperor (character), 19n18
- Octavian*, 82n35, 82n36, 89, 147
- Octovian*, 82
- Odlyn, John, 99n27
- Odo of Bayeux, 59
- Ogborn, Miles, 126n4
- Ogier le Danois*, 71
- Olaf Sihtricson, king of Dublin and of
Northumbria, 40, 41n40
- Olaf Guthfrithson, king of Dublin and of
Northumbria, 33, 34, 41n40

The Exploitations of Medieval Romance

- Old Testament, 147
 Oliver/Olivier (character), 58, 59, 63, 65, 70, 103
 Olympias (character), 145, 152
 Order of the Garter, 71, 160
 Origen: *Contra Celsus*, 109
 Origny, 63
 Orleans, 111
 Ormrod, W. Mark, 161n14
 Orosius, 141n6
 Oroz, Jose Reta, 110n6
 Orfeo, Sir (character), 25n47
 Oseney abbey, 53, 54n42
 O'Sullivan, Mary Isabelle, 86n56, 103n43
 Otto III, emperor of Germany, 117n14
Otinel, 68, 79, 86
 Otuel (character), 81, 86, 103
Otuel a Knight, 67, 69, 80, 92n7
Otuel and Roland, 80, 86n56, 92n7, 100, 103
 Oulmont, Charles, 162n17
 Ovid, 3
 Metamorphoses, 2, 3
 Art of Love, 2
 Oxford, 52, 53, 54, 91n4
- Palamon (character), 126, 127
 Pallissida (character), 146
Pañcatantra, 142n14
 Panunzio, Saverio, 68n32
 Paradise, 141n9, 142, 153, 155
 Parkes, M. B., 54n43
Parliament of the Three Ages, 76n12
 Paris, 45
 Paris, Gaston, 52n30, 61n14
 Partonope (character), 113, 114
Partonope of Blois, 84n42, 112, 113, 114, 116, 117, 119, 123, 124
Partonopeus de Blois, 82n34, 84n42, 112
 Patterson, Lee, 21n26
 Paul the Deacon: *Historia Langobardum*, 54n42
 Payen, Jean-Charles, 19n16, 44
 Percy, Roy J., 15n2, 15n3, 16n6, 17, 18n12, 18n15, 23, 26
 Pearl, 121n21
 Pearsall, Derek, 1, 8, 11, 87, 125, 129n11
 Peckham, Lawton P. G., 141n9
- Pecock, Bishop Reginald, 93, 95, 99, 100, 101, 106n50, 107n53
 Repressor of Over Much Blaming of the Clergy, 107n53
Le Pèlerinage de Charlemagne, 65, 68
 Pentangle, 122
 Pentecost, 61n15, 159
Perceval, Continuations of, 165
 Perceval (character), 64
 Perche, Count of, 162
 Perilous Bed, 117n16
Perlesvaus, 68n33, 85, 166n29
 Perse/Persia, 29, 30, 31, 32n16, 109
 Peters, Edward, 44n5, 54n42, 109n3
 Peter's Pence, 61
 Pheyonas (character), 149
 Philip, king of Macedon (character), 145, 147, 155
 Philip, 3rd prior of St Frideswide's, 52, 53
 Philip of Tripoli, 142n13
 Phyllis (character), 142n14
 pilgrimage, 43, 44, 45, 47, 48, 49, 51
 pilgrim(s), 44, 45, 47, 48, 49, 50, 51, 71
 Pipino, Francesco, 151n35
 Pitard, Derrick G., 106n50
 Plato: *Timaeus*, 54n40
 Pliny the Elder: *Historia Naturalis (Natural History)*, 109
 Plotinus, 109
 Poisoned Maiden (character), 149, 151, 152
 Poitou, 119
 Pollan, Michael, 125
 Pompey the Great, 61n15
 Pope, Mildred, 4n12, 78n18
 Porus, 30, 32n15
 Porrus (character), 151, 153, 155
 Portugal, 115
 Postler, David, 53n39
 Poverty (character), 128
 Pratt, Karen, 79, 94n12
 Pressyne (character), 119, 121
 Prestwich, J. O., 10n25
 Prestwich, Michael, 160n3, 160n5, 161n14
 Priamoure (character), 32n15
 Priamus (character), 65, 70
 Price, Paul, 47n13
La Prise de Defur, 141n9
La Prise d'Orange, 80n28
 Pritchard, R. Telfryn, 141n6

General Index

- The Prophecies of Merlin*, 83n39
Prose Lancelot, 84n44, 65, 163n19
 Prospero (character), 111
 Pseudo-Callisthenes, 141, 146
 Pseudo-Turpin, 79, 80n29, 81
Pseudo-Turpin Chronicle, 53n38, 69, 80n29, 93, 94, 95n15, 98, 99, 100, 101, 104, 105
 Psyche, 113
 Puille, 33
 Purdie, Rhiannon, 76
 Putter, Ad, 16n7, 109n3
- Quatre Fils Aymon*, see *Renaut de Montaubon*
- Rægnald (Ragnall Guthfrithson), viking king, 40
 Raimondin (character), 119, 120, 121
 Raoul de Cambrai (character), 47
Raoul de Cambrai, 63
 Raudvere, Catharina, 109n3
Rauf Coilyear, see *Taill of Rauf Coilyear*
 Rebellious Vassal cycle, 79
 Reeve, Michael D., 3n6
 Reims, 117n15
Reinbrun, 70
 Rainbrun (character), 43, 55
 Reiner (character), 51
remanieurs, 31, 34, 41
 Renaut (character), 47
Renaut de Montauban (Les Quatre Fils Aymon), 46, 70, 71, 72
 Rencesvals/Roncevaux, 57, 59, 60
 Rendell, Steven, 126n5
 Revard, Carter, 5n2, 5n3
 rewriting, 29, 131
 Richard I (Cœur de Lion), king of England, 164
 Richer of Reims, 40
 Richmond, Velma Bourgeois, 44n8
 Riddy, Felicity, 85n50
 Rigmel (character), 50
 Riley-Smith, Jonathan, 44n6, 49n19
 Roach, William, 165n27
 Robert, archbishop of Jumièges, 59
 Robert d'Artois, 129, 137
 Robert de Chesney, 54n43
 Robert Guiscard, 61
 Robert of Cricklade, 2nd prior of St Frideswide's, 54
 Robert of Gloucester, 38n32
 Robert of Gretham, 66, 68
Le Miroir, 68n32
 Robert of Reims: *Historia Iherosolimitana*, 60n11
Robert of Sicily, 136n23
 Robert of Torigini, 58n5
Le Roi Ponthus, 72
 Roland (Rowland) (character), 57, 58, 59, 60, 62, 63, 70, 93, 94, 95, 96, 97, 98, 99, 100, 101, 102, 103, 105, 106, 107
Roland and Vernagu, 69, 80, 92n7, 94, 95
Roman d'Alexandre, see *Alexander*
Le Roman de la Rose, 125, 128, 131
Roman de toute chevalerie, see *Thomas of Kent*
- romance
 Alexander romances, 139, 152
 alliterative romance, 85
 Anglo-Norman romance, 9, 28, 43, 48, 54, 65, 67, 70, 75, 79, 82, 84, 87, 88
 Arthurian romances, 3, 6, 7, 8, 10, 68, 69, 70, 72, 84, 85, 117n16, 162, 163
 Charlemagne romances, 80, 81, 83, 86, 88, 91, 92, 93, 94, 96, 100, 103, 106
 chivalric romance, 164
 Continental romances, 3, 4, 63, 67, 69, 74, 87, 146
 courtly romances, 139, 149, 156, 160
 crusading romances, 93, 100
 French prose romances, 71–2
 Gawain romances, 84
 Grail romances, 163
 historical romances, 83
 insular romances, 3, 4, 6, 7, 8, 10, 11, 43, 48, 50, 63, 64, 65, 66, 72, 82, 87
 Middle English romances, 9, 10, 11, 12, 64, 70, 73, 74, 78, 79, 80, 82, 84, 86n55, 91, 108, 127
 non-cyclical romances, 82, 88
Romance of Duke Rowland and Sir Otuell of Spayne, 103n42
Romance of Horn, see *Thomas*
 Romans, 40
Romans of Partenay, 118n18
Romaunce deu Brut, e del Roy Costentin, 61, 84n44
 Rome, 61, 64, 115, 117, 121, 128n10, 131n17

The Exploitations of Medieval Romance

- Roncesvalles, 57, 59, 60
 Ross, D. J. A., 141n7, 141n8
 Rouen, 71
 Round Table, 135, 159, 160
 Rouse, Robert, 9n17, 33n20, 37n31
 Roxane (character), 142, 149, 156, 157
 Rushton, Cory James, 113n9
 Rychner, Jean, 83n37
- saints, 44, 48, 53n34, 55
 saints' lives, 43, 51, 52, 53, 65
 St Alexis, 45, 51, 52
 St Augustine, 110, 171
 De Civitate Dei, 109
 Sermons, 171n33
 St Augustine's Abbey, Canterbury, 81n32
 St Basil, 117n15
 St Bernard of Clairvaux: *Vita S. Malachiae*, 11n27
 St Edmund, 52
 St Eustace, 51n29
 St Foy, 52n30
 St Frideswide, 52, 53, 55
 St Frideswide, priory of, 10, 53, 54
 Vita S. Frediswidæ, 54
 St Gilles, 52
 St Gregory I, 'the Great', Pope, 52, 53
 St James, 104, 105
 St Luke, 50
 St Mary, 55
St Patrick's Purgatory, 98
 Saldanha, Kathryn, 148n31, 149n33
 Salerno, 44
 Salisbury, Eve, 9n21, 135n22
 Salter, Elizabeth, 125
 Samson (character), 144, 155, 156
 Sands, Donald, 133
 Sansunnet/Sanson (character), 68
 Saracen(s) /Sarazins, 10, 28, 30, 33n15, 34, 35, 36, 45, 57, 60, 62, 63, 64, 65, 69, 70, 71, 72, 92, 93, 94, 100, 101, 103, 104, 105, 106
 Saracen giants, 70
 Sarton, George, 142n14
 Saturday, 59n6
 Saunders, Corinne, 3n8, 4n9, 12, 18n13, 23n40, 25n47, 28n1, 66n27, 108n1, 139n2
 Saxon(s), 28, 34, 35, 36
 Sayers, William, 58n5
 Schmolke-Hasselmann, Beate, 68
 Scotland, 6n14, 13, 40, 140, 143, 144, 145, 146
 Scott, A. B., 11n28
 Scott, Kathleen, 125n1
 Scott, Sir Walter, 73n2
 Scull, Christopher, 53n37
Secretum Secretorum, 142, 144, 151n35, 152
 Sedene/Sedne, *see* Saxon
 Segar, 142, 147
Sege of Melayne, 70, 80, 81, 92n7, 95n13, 103
 Seigne/Seine, *see* Saxon
 Semiramis, Queen, 19n18
 Serbia, 90
 Sesne, *see* Saxon
 Sessouigne, 33
 Seymour, M. C., 142n12
 Shakespeare, William, 16n5, 75n5
 A Midsummer Night's Dream, 117
 The Tempest, 111
 Sharpe, William, 84n45
 Shepherd, Stephen H. A., 80n29, 91n2, 93n10, 95, 96, 98n24, 103n40, 104n47, 105
 Shirt, David J., 4n11
 Short, Ian, 5n13, 15n2, 17, 18n12, 18n15, 23, 26, 54n40, 62n17, 75n4
 Sicily, 132n17
 Sihtric, king of York, 40
 Simon de Montfort, 137
Simon de Pouille, 71
 Simon de Walsingham, 52n30
 Simpson, James, 107n52, 156n39, 156n40
 Sinclair, K. V., 75n6, 79n26, 80n27, 82n36
Sir Amadace, 89, 136n23
Sir Bevis of Hampton (Sir Beues of Hamtoun), 4, 66n27, 67, 70, 77, 78, 79n23
Sir Degare, 77n15, 89
Sir Ferumbras, 80n29, 92n7
Sir Gawain and the Green Knight, 14, 109n3, 113n9, 121, 123, 124, 160, 164, 165n26, 167, 168n32, 169, 172
Sir Gowther, 25n47
Sir Isumbras, 89
Sir Lambewell, 16n7
Sir Landevale, 82
Sir Launfal, *see* Chestre, Thomas
Sir Orfeo, 86
Sir Percyvall of Galles, 70, 84
Sir Tristrem, 73n2, 83, 87

General Index

- Smith, D. Vance, 137, 138n27
 Smithers, G. V., 87, 147n27
 Smyser, H. M., 86n56
 Sodman, Timothy, 15n3
 Solomon, 144
 Somerset, Fiona, 99n30, 106n50
 Sommer, H. O., 117n16
Song of Roland, 80, 81, 92n7, 103, 104n45
 Soredamor (character), 5
 Southern, R. W., 54n43, 90n1
The Sowdon of Babylon, 80, 92n7
 Spain, 60, 104, 105, 115, 116
 Spearing, A. C., 8n15, 16n7, 22
 Speed, Diane, 10n24, 34n25, 36
 Speyer, 32n16
 Spiegel, Gabrielle M., 10n23, 163n20
The Squire of Low Degree, 127, 130, 132, 133, 134, 138
 Stenton, F. M., 59n7, 61n14
 Stephen IX, Pope, 59
 Stigand, Archbishop of Canterbury, 59
 Stokes, Myra, 16n7, 21n28
 Stokstad, Marilyn, 130n14, 131
 Stones, Alison, 84n45, 85n49
 Storey, Christopher, 52n30
 Strauss, Dieter, 143n18
 Strickland, Matthew, 161n11, 161n12
 Strite, Sheri Ann, 168n32
 Strongbow, Richard fitz Gilbert of Clare, 10n25
 Stürzinger, Jakob, 167n30
 Suadthede/Suathede, 34
 Sudene, 34n22
 Suthede, 34
 Swan Knight (character), 85
 Swathede, 34
 Sweden, 34, 41n41
 Sweeney, Michelle, 108n2
 Sweetenham, Carol, 60n11
 Sylvester II, Pope, 117n15
 Szell, Timea, 43n3
 Talbot, John, 1st earl of Shrewsbury, 71
 Taillefer, 58, 59
Taill of Rauf Coilyear, 92n7, 94, 103, 145
 Tarasia, queen of Spain, 142n13
 Taymouth, castle of, 140
 Terre de Dee, 153
 Terri (character), 49, 51, 55
 Terror (Úath) (character), 165, 170
 Theophilus, 117n15
 Theophine, queen of Spain, 142n13
The Thewis of Gud Women, 142, 148n31, 150
 Thiébaux, Marcelle, 113n10
 Thomas, 4n12
The Romance of Horn, 4, 10, 34, 50, 66, 67, 78
 Thomas, Keith, 109n3
 Thomas of Britain, 5, 50, 83, 87
Tristan/Tristran, 5, 50, 66, 83, 87, 130
Carlisle Fragment, 5n13
 Thomas of Ercildoune, 73n2
 Thomas of Kent: *Roman de toute chevalerie*, 66, 77, 139, 151
 Thomson, R. M., 54n42, 58n3
 Thornbury, 52
 Thornton, Robert, 69, 70
 Thorpe, William, 99, 106n51
 Tillott, P. M., 40n36
 Tolan, John Victor, 91n4, 101n34
 Toledo, 117n15
 Tolkien, J. R. R., 108
 toponymy, 28, 41, 70
 Torti, Anna, 24n43
 tournament(s), 160, 161, 162
 translation(s), 73, 74, 75, 76, 77, 78, 79, 81, 82, 84, 86, 87, 88, 89, 139
 translator(s), 74, 75, 87, 88, 104, 105, 107, 143
 Trask, Willard R., 125n2
 Trevet, Nicholas: *Chronique*, 83n41
 Triamor, king (character), 30, 32, 33, 49
 Trinity, 107
 Tristam/Tristan (character), 5n13, 50, 68
 Tristan, legend of, 7
 Tristram (character), 5n13, 50, 68
Tristramssaga, 50
 Troilus (character), 70
 Trounce, A. Mc. I, 86n57
 Troy, 30, 88, 153
 Truce of God, 59
 Tryamour (character), 136
 Turks, 71, 90, 91
 Turner, Edith, 49n20
 Turner, Victor, 49n20
 Turpin, archbishop (character), 60
Turpines Story, 12, 92n7, 93, 94, 95, 96, 98–107

The Exploitations of Medieval Romance

- Turville-Petre, Thorlac, 9n22, 88n62
 Tyre, 30, 31, 32, 141n8
- Ulrich von Zatzikhoven: *Lanzelet*, 21n30
 Urban II, Pope, 60
 Usk, Adam, 92
 The Chronicle of Adam Usk, 92n9
- Van Buren, Anne Hagopian, 129
 Van Duin, Deborah E., 147n29, 151n35
 van Engen, John, 106n50
 van Houts, Elisabeth, 2n4
 Vásquez, Nila González, 109n3
 Vauchez, André, 43n3
 Venus, 149
 Vernagu (character), 94n12, 95, 100
 Viard, Jules, 159n1
 Victor II, Pope, 59
La Vie de Saint Louis, 61n14
 Vinaver, Eugene, 64n22
 Vincent, Diane, 12
 Vincensini, Jean-Jacques, 25n47
 Visser, Elizabeth, 154n38
Les Vœux du Paon, 148n31, 149
Voyage d'Alexandre au Paradis Terrestre, see Alexander
 Vries, F. C. de, 82n33
Vulgate prose cycle, 117n16, 163n19
- Wace, 2, 3, 5, 35, 58, 59, 78, 84, 88
 Roman de Brut, 3n6, 35, 36, 38, 77n14, 82, 83n39, 84, 85, 88
 Roman de Rou, 2n4, 58
Waldef, 38n33, 50, 51, 54n44, 86
 Waldef (character), 51
 Waldron, Ronald, 121n21, 164n23
 Wales, 5, 6
 Wallace, David, 11n29, 67n30, 91n5, 127n7
 Wallingford, castle of, 54n44
 Warm, Robert, 81n31
 Wars of the Roses, 72
 Warwick (Warewic/Warwec/Warwic), 37, 38, 39, 55
 Wasserman, Julian N., 168n32
 Waste Castle, 166
 Wathelet-Willem, Jeanne, 53n38
 Watson, A. G., 54n40, 54n41
- Webber, Tessa, 53n38, 54n40, 54n41
 Weiss, Judith, 3n6, 4n9, 8n16, 9, 10, 14, 16n7, 28n1, 30n6, 30n9, 32n18, 33n19, 34n24, 35n29, 47n13, 51n26, 51n28, 55n45, 66, 83n38, 134n20, 137, 138n29, 139n2
 Weiss, Victoria L., 168n32
 Wells Cathedral Library, 85n48
 Wessex, 36
 Westminster, 61n15
 Wheel of Fortune, 157
 Wheeler, Bonnie, 85n47
 Whitehead, Frederick, 60n12
 Whitelock, Dorothy, 40
 Wiesen, David S., 109n5
 Wiggins, Alison, 29n5, 43n2, 51n28, 55n45, 67n29, 76n8, 76n9, 76n10, 85n53
 Wilkins, David: *Concilia Magnae Britanniae et Hiberniae*, 95n16, 101n36
 William de Briane: *Anglo-Norman Pseudo-Turpin Chronicle*, 81n30, 92n7
 William of Auvergne, 110
 William of Malmesbury, 35, 40, 54n42, 57, 58n3, 58n4, 59
 Gesta Regum Anglorum, 40n38, 58n3, 58n4, 117n15
 William I of England, duke of Normandy (the Conqueror), 57, 58, 59, 60, 61, 62, 63, 72
 William of Palerne (character), 85, 114, 115, 116, 131, 132, 133
William of Palerne, 85, 86n54, 114, 118, 123, 124, 127, 130, 131, 133, 138
 William Marshal, 4n10, 161n15, 163
 History of William Marshal, 11n28
 William Short-Nose, see Guillaume d'Orange
William Wallace, see Hary
 Williams, Elizabeth, 16n7, 25n46
 Williams, Janet Hadley, 140n5
 Williams, Steven J., 142n13
 Wilson, R. M., 81n32, 59, 86n59
 Wilson, Stephen, 53n34
 Winchester, 28, 33, 36, 37, 38, 39, 41, 42, 160
 Winchester, Council of, 59n8
 Windsor Castle, 5, 159
 Winterbottom, M., 58n3
 Wonders of the East, 139, 142n12, 151, 152
 Woodstock, 137
 Wormald, Jenny, 146
 Wright, Cyril Ernest, 99

General Index

Wright, Neil, 3n6, 64n23

Wyclif, 92, 99, 101, 102

Wycliffites, 92

Xerxes, 109

Ydory (character), 149

Yhanna ibn el-Batrik, 142n13

Ynde, 32

York (3ork), 37, 38, 39, 40, 41, 42

Yrayne (character), 117, 118

Yseut (character), 2, 3, 7

Yuletide, 169

Yvain (character), 7

Ywain and Gawain, 84

Zeeman, Nicolette, 107n52

Zoroaster, 109

Zumthor, Paul, 19n16, 23n35

Zupitza, Julius, 32n13, 32n14, 49n20

As one of the most important, influential and accommodating genres of the middle ages, the romance was exploited for a variety of social and cultural reasons: to celebrate and justify war and conflict, chivalric ideologies, and national, local and regional identities; to rationalize contemporary power structures, and identify the present with the legendary past; to align individual desires and aspirations with social virtues. But the romance in turn exploited available figures of value, appropriating the tropes and strategies of religious and historical writing, and cannibalizing and recreating its own materials for heightened ideological effect. The essays in this volume consider individual romances, groups of writings and the genre more widely, elucidating a variety of exploitative manoeuvres in terms of text, context, and intertext.

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